



Higher Education Transformation Network

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For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE: DHET GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE POLICY

The Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN) hereby welcomes the publishing of the “*Policy Framework to address Gender-Based Violence in the Post-School Education and Training System*” draft policy by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

We welcome the introduction of this policy which is long overdue. Since our establishment in 2011, we have always advocated that the South African higher education remain one of the most untransformed workplaces and economic sectors in the country.

The National Development Plan Vision 2030 states that “*universities should be welcoming for black and female teachers, students and researchers*” to ensure “*significant progress in reversing gender and racial imbalances in the higher education sector to ensure that African and women make up 50% of the teaching and research staff of universities*”.

To this end we have always supported historic Ministerial interventions in the affairs of higher education institutions to address fraud and identified lapses in corporate governance at identified institutions.

We believe that Ministerial interventions should not only take place in the case of financial mismanagement or loss of statutory oversight only but that the Minister of Higher Education needs to also intervene where racial and gender discrimination proliferates or where transformation is abused or not being implemented at all under the veil of institutional autonomy.

Higher Education ACCESS for ALL Communities



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Whilst we support the current gender-based violence policy, we are concerned that the draft policy appears to focus largely on universities and the protection of female students to the exception of black female academia and female administrative staff employed within the university and TVET sector, some of whom are still subjected to daily gender-based harassment and discriminatory practices.

In our joint study published jointly with the Commission for Gender Equity (CGE) titled “*Gender Transformation in the Higher Education Sector*” published in September 2016 (http://www.hetn.org.za/documents/CGE_HETN_Study_Final.pdf), the study found several indicators that belied lack of gender transformation in the higher education sector in the form of:-

- Non-Compliance with Employment Equity targets
- Discriminatory Workplace Practices
- Workplace Victimizations
- Poor Career Growth Avenue for Female Staff
- Adverse Organizational Culture belying Racism and Sexism
- Disproportionate / Secretive Remuneration scales
- High Turnover of Black / Female Staff

From the above study, it remains clear that whilst institutional policies within the higher education sector remain in place, gender transformation and an end to gender discriminatory practices which are the enablers of gender-based violence, will not be attained if the implementation of institutional policies is not monitored and measured continuously by all internal and external stakeholders within the higher education sector.

We hold the view that the successful implementation of the proposed gender-based violence policy is bound to fail if institutional Councils are left to their own devices in the implementation of the above policy without any specific monitoring by external role-players and Chapter 9 institutions but most importantly the Transformation Oversight Committee whose mandate is currently being undermined by university Vice-Chancellors currently represented by Universities South Africa.

Institution of higher learning can no longer hide sexism, corruption, mismanagement and racism under the veil of institutional autonomy. Ends



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About the Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN):-

The Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN) is an independent network of alumni and graduates from various higher education and further educational institutions across South Africa committed to the process of transformation of higher education to increase equitable and access to education, skills and learning to eliminate of socio-economic disparities.

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