

Development of Human Potential is her Vocation

Nolitha Fakude doesn't waste time on pleasantries. She declines the offer of tea from her personal assistant. By day she is executive director of Sasol Limited, a title she has held since 2005. Her career spans portfolios in human resource management, corporate affairs, transformation and empowerment. She has received several awards, among them: The 20 most Influential Businesswoman for 2004, an honour bestowed by the Financial Mail.

Not one to do things in half measures, Fakude has served on the board of the Human Resource Development Council since its inception in 2010. "I like feeling I'm part of a bigger picture," she reasons. "The private and public sectors and the social partners each look at the situation – outside the box – in terms of a framework for human potential." The board does not address one aspect, but the whole value chain of human development.

Unlocking the Potential of the Country

Fakude's commitment to unlocking the human potential in South Africa and the economy is the reason behind her making the time to serve on the HRDC board. Priority areas are early childhood development, improving science and maths results, and the development of a green and maritime economy. "With education and a focus on the right skills, our economy will grow at the rate it needs to," she says.

"Education is the key to getting a job in areas where we are not currently skilled up. There needs to be partnerships between higher education and industry. It doesn't help to develop a skill that industry doesn't need and on the other hand, to have education feeling that industry doesn't support them, especially when industry contributes a skills development levy.

The HRDC is driving initiatives where industry partners with a faculty at a Technical Vocation Education Training (TVET) College. Sasolburg TVET College is working with industry to produce chemical engineers and welders. "Being a welder is a mobile skill that you can use everywhere and you can share the skill with other companies."

Internships Sparked Debate

"The HRDC spent two years within Nedlac defining respective responsibilities for the graduate and for industry. We raised questions like can the intern be a member of a union? What should be the ratio between a supervisor and an intern? This is critical, for example where there are scarce skills you would need a ratio of 1:5." Fakude maintains the view that any South African can contribute towards education whether it's at primary school or



Nolitha Fakude, Executive Director, Sasol Limited and on HRDC Board

higher education level. Industry can offer internships and in service training while parents can support parent teachers' associations. Entrepreneurship has received attention. "The HRDC has motivated that entrepreneurship be part of the school curriculum from as early as grade 8," says Fakude.

Interventions by the HRDC

The HRDC is driving various interventions within education. "The National Education Collaboration Trust is a typical example of an outcome which is focused on basic education delivering outcomes at line function level. We look at the different provinces and see where the challenges are. So in one province it may mean sorting out logistics so that school books are delivered on time. The Council is also looking at building the capacity of regional managers."

A holistic approach is taken. "The HRDC looked at education from the cradle to work and beyond work, as there is lifelong learning," explains Fakude. "A child's progress in life would be seen in context within that life cycle. This incorporates multiple issues. When we saw a child-headed household not eligible for a child care grant because they were 18 years, the eligibility age for the grant was extended. There is collaboration within and across parties and policy makers."

The HRDC is starting to see policies becoming aligned, which is translated into execution. "Collaboration between community colleges and the private sector is very important," Fakude reflects. All those serving on the board of the HRDC commit their time and expertise voluntarily. We thank them for their commitment to improving South Africa's skills base and increasing the opportunities to access skilled employment. □