A Review of SSACI's Technical and Vocational Training for Employment

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1 INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in 2001, SSACI has supported a range of training and job creation projects for South African youth. These projects have focused on the development of vocational skills and entrepreneurial capacity. SSACI has placed a particular emphasis on the development of a model of vocational training that prepares young people for immediate access to the workplace. In order to achieve this, SSACI funded vocational training typically consists of the following elements:

- A technical skills training course, usually leading to a recognised qualification

- A practical component which enables learners to apply the skills that they have acquired

- Additional life skills training

- Post-training support in finding or creating employment, sometimes including a period of on-the-job mentorship

It is noted that the latter two elements are not generally part of traditional training programmes and contribute to a higher input costs. However, the inclusion of these two elements is premised on the expectation that the increased investment will have a more successful outcome in terms of employability. This would then make the training more cost-effective than traditional training where it does not lead to effective employment returns.

The extent to which this model appears to be working is illustrated by the achievements of the programmes supported by SSACI. A review of the figures shows that by March 2009, SSACI has funded over 50 development projects which has resulted in:

- **4'700** youths being enrolled for training
- **3'500** of these youths graduating from training (92% of those scheduled to graduate)
- **3'200** of these graduates generating regular incomes through wage- or self-employment
- **360** new micro-enterprises being started up
- **500** pre-existing enterprises receiving business-development services
- **1'100** entirely new jobs being created (excluding existing, vacant jobs filled by alumni)

To do this SSACI has worked with a range of organisations – some of which are private sector or non-government organisations which have a track record and expertise in the programme area and has formed partnerships with public institutions to ensure that programmes offered can achieve maximum impact and sustainability. A further nuance is that while SSACI has continued to work in key economic sectors, it has adopted specific projects which more directly tackle skills needs in the country, particularly in the arenas of hospitality skills and artisanal skills.

Problem Statement
In the 1980s, with the decline of the apprenticeship scheme, there was a decline in the numbers receiving artisanal training. There has also been increasing distance between what is considered more general vocational training and the South African labour market and for a range of reasons training has not necessarily enabled the young person to easily integrate into the labour market.

The introduction of the new skills development dispensation in 2001, through the National Skills Development Strategy, sought to actively incentivise more demand-driven training and to ensure that young people are able to get the necessary on-the-job training. Initiatives that were introduced included the development and implementation of learnerships and skills programmes as well as the levy grant system. More recently there has been a renewed focus on apprenticeships as well as the phasing in of equitable tax incentives which recognise both learnerships and apprenticeships. Further initiatives, such as JIPSA, provided further impetus in to the work being undertaken to increase the levels of training in artisan related occupations. In addition to these developments, the transformation of the FET College curriculum has placed pressure on these institutions to more effectively equip young people for entry into job opportunities.

Recent figures (provided by both the Department of Labour and in other research projects undertaken[1]) suggest that with these changes there has been a gradual increase in the numbers of learners that are accessing these programmes.

However, there continue to be a number of challenges in this regard: Kraak (2008) suggests that the current pathways for intermediate skilling (apprenticeship, learnerships and FET College qualifications) do not offer structured linkages to employment. Further, there is an emerging body of research which demonstrates the poor uptake of young people from past vocational programmes into jobs (Cosser et al (2001); Gewer (2007 and 2008)). Similarly, research into labour market conditions indicates that having a matric qualification does not necessary provide the individual with an increased chance of finding employment (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2006).

The key explanations frequently provided for the poor absorption of young people relates to the perception of employers regarding the appropriateness and the quality of skills that are developed in these programmes. Specifically, the absence of work experience is considered to be a real concern. Further, young people from poor socio-economic environments generally have limited access to effective networks, either through the training provider / college or through family /community networks that can provide access to the workplace.

While the challenges highlighted thus far relate to the education and training provided to young people, these are coupled with labour market conditions that are particularly unfriendly for African youth and are in the context of an economy that is not growing fast enough. Inequality in the labour market appears to be endemic and this is evident in the youth unemployment rate: 58% of young people aged 15-19 and 50% aged 20-24 were unemployed in 2005. These unemployment rates are much higher for African youth. Therefore any education and training interventions that are proposed will need to take cognisance of this broader context.

The aim of this project
As illustrated above SSACI has demonstrated some successes in achieving favourable outcomes for young learners who participate in its projects. There is a general assumption that the model of combining technical skills, additional life skills, practical experience and supporting the young person's transition to the workplace through linkages enhances the employability of the young person, and thereby increases their chances of finding employment. However, there has been limited interrogation of what the critical success factors within these programmes are that assist the young person to realise enhanced employability, and the lessons that can

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[1] For example, the study commissioned by Business Leadership of South Africa (BLSA) on training in South Africa.

be derived from this for vocational programmes, both in FET Colleges and more generally.

This project will seek to extract and consolidate the knowledge that has been generated through the vocational training projects and to elicit models for successful implementation going into the future. This exercise asks a set of key questions aimed at establishing the factors within and outside of these programmes that contribute to or inhibit employability and successful labour market outcomes. These key questions, based on the literature, are outlined below:

- What is the model of delivery emerging from SSACI projects?
    - Who is the target group and how are they being reached?
    - What are the elements of delivery in terms of classroom and on-the-job training / workplace experience?
    - What are the support mechanisms for learners in terms of social, financial and educational needs?
    - What are the mechanisms to ensure quality of delivery and the necessary commitment from both learners and employers?
    - What are the mechanisms to measure the effectiveness and impact of the project?

- What are the strengths and weakness of the delivery model with respect to:
    - Reaching and retaining the target group?
    - The technical skills and knowledge being developed?
    - The employability skills being developed?
    - The support provided to learners?
    - Communication amongst key partners?
    - Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the programme and responding to challenges that arise?
    - Managing relationships with employers?
    - Preparation of learners for entry into the workplace?
    - Creating links to workplaces?

- What are the necessary conditions for ensuring that young people gain access to meaningful work opportunities during and/or after the programme of study?

As indicated these questions are rooted in the literature study and will be explored through a combination of methods which are detailed in the following section.

2 METHODOLOGY

The knowledge generation exercise seeks to extract key lessons emerging from the vocational training projects that have been or are being funded by SSACI. The research draws on a cross-section of projects that are implementing vocational programmes that follow the typical SSACI model of technical training (towards a recognised qualification), additional lifeskills and practical application. While teaching methodologies utulised during the institutional learning component will be considered, a primary focus will be on the development of employability skills through additional lifeskills training and support, the ways in which learners are provided

opportunities to practically apply their learning and the support provided to learners to enable them to access work opportunities. These latter elements provide the value-add that is expected to enhance the effectiveness of the programme in ensuring the learner is work ready and is more likely to find a meaningful job.

In order to track the effectiveness of the programmes, the research encapsulates both past and current projects. Initially it was anticipated that a dual methodology would be implemented which would focus on a tracer study for past projects and then more in-depth case studies of current projects. However during the research process it was agreed that it would be important to include certain of the projects in which learners had already completed their training and for this reason the following methods were adopted:

Research Design	Methodology
Survey Design: Tracer Study	Tracer Surveys of 50 Graduates using a structured questionnaire schedule (Telephonic)
	Interviews with 15 current employers using a structured questionnaire schedule (Telephonic)
Case Study Design:	Learners: • Focus groups with learners where learners are still in the programme and at a single institution • Telephonic interviews using a structured questionnaire schedule where learners are still in the progamme but not located in a single institution • Telephonic interviews using a structured questionnaire schedule where learners have completed the progamme
	Providers: • A combination of face to face and telephonic interviews with providers (included lecturers and project managers) using a semi-structured questionnaire
	Employers • Telephonic interviews with current **host** employers using a structured questionnaire • Telephonic interviews with employers of learners that have already graduated where relevant

The details of the research design are provided below:

Survey: Tracer Study
The purpose of the tracer surveys is to track the destinations of a sample of graduates from SSACI-funded projects. The surveys ask questions about the factors within and outside of the projects that contributed to the learners' entry into the labour market. Factors that are probed include: the curriculum content, delivery approach, and extent of theory and practice integration, links between the provider and the labour market, and other resources that may have assisted their entry into jobs.

The Tracer Survey is with **50 graduates** across 5 projects. A random sample will be drawn, from the total database. This will be analysed in terms of the different programme field as well as gender and race (where applicable). The structured interviews (provided in Annexure 1) focused on:

• Current job status, including occupation and earnings
• Changes in jobs since graduating and reasons for this
• Ratings on institutional training experience, including curriculum content, delivery approach and effectiveness of trainers, materials and resources

- Ratings on workplace training experience, including delivery approach and effectiveness of mentor, receptiveness of the environment and scope of experience.
- Resources/Strategies utilised in finding a job (SSACI, personal networks, provider or others)
- Relationship between job and studies in terms of applications of knowledge and skill
- Reasons for not finding a job

The interviews with 15 current employers were undertaken on the basis of information provided by the graduates in terms of their current employment. The telephonic surveys with employers covered the following issues:

- Extent of uptake of graduates into employment on completion of the programme and into what positions
- How they went about recruiting the graduates
- Perception of the skills levels of the graduates on entering the workplace (technical and lifeskills)
- Perceptions on the levels of employability of the graduates
- Further development that was necessary, if any, to make the graduates more adequately prepared for the workplace
- Status of the graduates that were taken up and prospects for future growth

As indicated the tracer study was coupled with more in-depth case studies and the methodology employed for these studies is discussed below.

Case Studies
The research investigated a targeted set of projects which are supported by SSACI. The methodology varied depending whether learners were still in the programme and on whether learners could be found at a single site. Each of the case studies addressed the following issues:

- Purpose of the project
- Delivery approach: including the way in which theory and practice are integrated
- Skills and competence of the educators
- Nature of the support provided (academic and other forms of support)
- Life skills components (content, how it is delivered, applicability, etc – this includes a focus on the role of the mentors where relevant.)
- Workplace learning component (type of placement during the programme, challenges experienced, levels of support, extent to which workplace and institutional based training are integrated)
- Support mechanisms for finding work after the completion of the training (including where there is a workplace component after the formal programme structured into the overall design)
- The management of the different components of the programme
- The challenges and successes associated with the programme.
- Perceptions on the levels of employability of the learners on completion of the workplace learning and the factors that contributed to or inhibited this.
- Potential for uptake of learners into employment on completion of the programme and into what positions

The case studies therefore provide a more nuanced understanding of the particular models being adopted, the similarities and differences across different providers and sectors and the success and challenges associated with each of these. The table below indicates the details of who was interviewed for each of the case studies.

Name of Project	Name of Service Provider	No. of learners for Focus group sessions	Telephonic Interviews with learners	Lecturers interviewed	Project Manager interviewed	Training Manager interviewed	Host employers interviewed
Western Cape Community ECD Services	Centre for Early Chidlhood Development (CECD)	21 learners - Age group 18-25	N/A	Wilma Tindall Kholekha Zide	Mr Toufeeq Thomas:	Bonita Daniels	Montague Drive Primary – Mrs Sasman Wavecrest Primary - Mr Africa Westville Primary – Mrs Salie
TECSAT College Scholarships	Technical Colleges Student Aid Trust (TECSAT)	18 learners in the tracer study plus 9 additional learners in a focus group	N/A	Mr G. Hendricks	Mrs Debby Chuter	N/A	Robin Trust – Ms Lynn Louw Land – way Carriers – Mr Mogamat Rasdien Atlantic Trust – Mr Robert Houliston
KZN Rural Health Project	Friends of Mosvold Hospital Trust (FOM)	N/A	6 learners in the original tracer plus 7 additional interviews	N/A	Gavin McGregor and Dumisani Gumede	N/A	Mrs Elda Nsimbini from Mosvold Hospital Dr E.M Kekana from Hlabisa Hospital
KZN Poultry Learnerships	KZN Poultry Institute (KZNPI)	N/A	Completed 13 interviews	N/A	Mrs Meryl Bowker	N/A	Rainbow chickens – Reuben Mohapi Ross poultry Breeders – Warren Vinson
Accelerated Artisan Training	Fundi Training Centre	10 learners – age group 18-25 on the 23rd Feb-09 at Fundi training centre Benoni	N/A	Emile Jacobs and Goodman Sokhela on the 23rd Feb at Fundi Training Centre –	Mr Desmond Uithaler on the 23rd Feb-09	N/A	Eagleburgmann – Philisile Khaba Rheem S.A – Ken Webb Duraset – Rose Mathafeta
Hospitality Skills for 2010	Hospitality Youth Initiative (HYI)	10 learners – telephonic interviews plus additional interviews with the current learners	10 learners – telephonic interviews	Duncan Peltason	Sue Bursey	N/A	Mr. Stephen Pietersen - City Lodge Hotel in Bloemfontein Mrs. Samantha Annandale – Courtyard Hotel in Cape Town
FET Colleges Project at Umgungundlovu	Umgungundlovu FET College	N/A			Shanita Roopnarain		N/A

This section has explained the approach adopted: the following section provides the literature review which framed this approach. In the final section of this report these different elements: the literature review, the tracer studies and the case studies will be integrated in order to allow for the key themes and issues to be surfaced and explored.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Youth unemployment and youth underemployment are common features of labour forces worldwide, but are more pronounced in developing countries. Growth in youth populations over the last half-century has been rapid, with Africa having the largest growth trend (O'Higgins, 2003). In addition, youth are invariably the most significant victims of poor economic growth as their propensity for unemployment is likely to be higher than the general population (Adams, 2007).

In seeking to address the challenge of youth unemployment, skills development[2] is inevitably viewed as the primary solution. There is evidence to suggest that increased investment in human capital results in increased employment prospects (Wolf, 2002). Most of this evidence is located at the level of the individual (Machin and Vignoles, 2001; Wolf, 2002) and is most commonly measured through changes in income. This evidence is stronger for returns to schooling and post-school education than for training in the workplace, and research indicates that more highly educated people are more likely to sustain employment (Wolf, 2002)

At the same time, the returns to education and training are masked by a range of factors, including the costs and time involved to complete qualifications (Machin and Vignoles, 2001) and the socio-economic conditions of the individual which invariably impacts on the types of programmes he or she can access (Ashton and Green, 1996). In addition, from an economic perspective, while governments will invariably look to correlations between education and economic growth to demonstrate value, it is difficult to accurately measure this relationship because of the range of contextual factors that intervene (ibid.)

As a result, there is still not adequate evidence to draw firm conclusions about the relationship between education and training and employment growth. (Ashton and Green, 1996; OECD, 2001) Despite this, skills solutions continue to be the key strategy to addressing issues of unemployment and social exclusion, particularly amongst youth (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). Although employability is now understood as an interaction between the individual and the labour market conditions, policy in many countries is still reliant on substantial investment in education and training as a means to achieve long-term employability and thereby release the social welfare burden from the state (ibid.).

International Vocational Education and Training (VET) trends

The process of industrialisation and the increasing pressures of globalisation have had a significant effect on VET. Many countries have instituted steps to vocationalise the secondary school curriculum and integrate academic and vocational skills, especially at higher levels (Adams, 2007). In many countries this has entailed a shift away from a strong focus on practical skills training under the dual-track system to one in which academic education dominates and vocational education occupies a minor portion of daily instruction. Practical training is then passed onto the enterprises. This move to integration is viewed as inevitable in the global economy as there is increased demand for generalisable skills and the need for young people to not restrict their options through narrow occupational routes (Raffe *et al.*, 1998). This pressure for integration is widespread and even affecting countries that have a strong

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[2] Increasing concern over the nature of skills needed for the knowledge economy has created a shift away from Vocational Education and Training (VET) to the broader term "Skills Development"

VET tradition. There has also been an increasing trend in many countries to create articulation between secondary vocational education and higher education, thus seeking to overcome the 'second-class' status of VET (Adams, 2007).

A further element of the integration process is to bring education closer to the world of work. Attempts to modernise and expand apprenticeship systems and offer young people more options to access work experience during and/or after schooling have been prominent in many developed countries (Adams, 2007). This process has demonstrated positive labour market outcomes, but mostly for males. Further, this approach appears to have a better result in countries with specific labour market contexts; for example these arrangements have not always been very successful in developing countries because of the predominance of the informal sector and the resultant non-availability of workplaces. Further, many of the apprenticeship programmes in developing countries are informal in nature and regulated by custom and tradition (Brewer, 2004). These apprenticeships typically comprise an informal arrangement between a trainee and a "master" trainer. The trainee learns through "serving" the "master", but the relationship lacks the formal learning structure of a modern "western-style" apprenticeship. It has been suggested that this can lead to apprenticeships that do not effectively facilitate learning but instead creates a pool of cheap labour; however other experiences documented suggest that there are also examples in which the trainees develop knowledge about the operation of the enterprise and eventually start his/her own business upon completion of training.

Other approaches to integration of education and work have been to introduce national youth service (especially in developing countries) as means to serve their communities, and to introduce work-based learning into the secondary school curriculum (as is the case with many European countries). Ultimately, demand for VET is linked to employment growth. Integrating vocational education into the secondary school curriculum does not necessarily better equip young people for the world of work, and seems to work better if it is introduced at higher levels of secondary education or in post-secondary education where it can build on a sound general education base and thus offer more choice (Adams, 2007).

The World Bank has compiled a Youth Employment Inventory aimed at capturing information on world-wide interventions which support young people with their transition to the labor market (Betcherman et al. 2007). Of the 289 studies that were conducted across 84 countries, skills training accounts for 39% of the interventions followed by "multi-service" interventions (incorporating classroom and on-the-job training with some form of subsidy or paid work experience and support in accessing work). The most frequently targeted groups are young people with low income and/or education. The survey found that most interventions are poorly evaluated and this impacts on the efficacy of the data available. As such, it is difficult to establish accurate measures of the impact of the programmes, especially in developing countries. While the majority of programmes were rated as having had a positive impact on the employment and/or earnings prospects of participants, this dropped to half once the cost-effectiveness of the programme was factored in. In addition, the study revealed no significant difference between the different types of interventions in terms of impact. However, the review did find that employment outcomes were more favourable in developing countries or where labour markets are flexible enough to accommodate youth.

Different approaches to youth employment interventions are apparent in Ango-Saxon and continental Europe countries who are members of the OECD (Puerto and Rother, 2007). The data suggests that whereas the comprehensive, multi-service approaches seem to work more effectively in Anglo-Saxon countries, vocational

training approaches seem to work better in continental European countries. Research also suggests that developing countries tend to focus on youth from low income families, while the focus of transition countries is on unemployed youth with low levels of education or who are out of school (Puerto, 2007b).

The Jóvenes programme is an example of a multi-service approach in Latin America. The programme was a direct response to the increasing encroachment of the global economy and the need for a more dynamic training system that could responding to changing demand with the necessary speed and flexibility (Cinterfor) Thus the programme sought to overcome the rigidity and/or weaknesses of the public vocational training systems and offer a more demand-driven approach. The targeted group for the programme was economically disadvantaged youth from low income families. The programme originated in Chile and was replicated in seven countries across the region. Jóvenes' multi-service approach integrates classroom training and work experience in basic and specific trades, as well as life skills, job search assistance, counseling, and information. Employers and beneficiaries receive financial incentives such as wage subsidies and daily stipends to maintain their participation. There is evidence of increased employment probability and earnings of participants upon graduation across the countries concerned.

Supporting employability
Skills solutions are complicated by the fact that youth transitions from school to work are becoming increasingly complex, due to the changing demands of the labour market (Raffo and Reeves, 2000). Increasingly youth studies demonstrate the extent to which young people shape and transform their transitions within their particular social context. These transitions are non-linear and invariably are protracted due to increased diversity in education and training opportunities (ibid. Furlong *et al*, 2003). In addition, youth are becoming increasingly aware of the realities of the labour market and are becoming more rational about their learning and career pathways (Wolf, 2002)

While the state will generally provide the education and training opportunities, it is the individual's responsibility to ensure he or she is and continues to remain attractive to the labour market through investment in his or her education with the aim of ensuring lifelong employability. This is particularly critical in the context of the globalising economy and changing demands for skills (Tin, 2006). Lifelong employability requires a sound foundation of *generic employability skills*, including basic skills (literacy, numeracy and IT skills), intellectual abilities (thinking skills, contextual understanding and organisational skills) and personal attributes (values and attitude and other affective elements) (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry & Business Council of Australia, 2002).

A high level of investment in human capital does not however ensure that there is a resultant employment opportunity in the labour market. There are a range of factors that may restrict an individual's employability, including the state of the economy, state policies aimed at enabling access to employment, and social factors. Beyond an individual's attributes, therefore, any analysis of the factors impacting on employability must take into account socio-economic conditions which may impact on an individual's ability or willingness to take up employment, including household circumstances, the existence of a work culture within the home or more broadly in the community and access to networks (transport, financial capital and social capital). In this way, strategies for supporting employability can take cognisance of the obstacles or barriers that the individual must overcome, especially in a context of social inequality. (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005)

Therefore, programmes to support employability cannot focus solely on skills but must include a focus on broader support in accessing the labour market and stimulating demand for the skills being produced. The key risk to be avoided, in a development context, is that programmes should not contribute to increased social exclusion.

Bridging and linking
In the face of difficult social and economic environments, vulnerable or "at-risk" individuals require strong individual agency combined with a strong resource base (Furlong *et al.*, 2003) Weakness in individual agency and the resource base will undermine effective transitions. This individual agency emerges from strong family and social relationships which are supportive of educational and other choices. In order to access the labour market, however, youth need to have access to broader relationships which can facilitate exposure to workplaces and authentic learning (Raffo and Reeves, 2000). In situations of inequality access to broader networks will be limited for disadvantaged youth, and these youth will most likely be locked into narrow channels for growth and development. In the absence of access to broader social networks, disadvantaged youth will invariably rely on personal relationships to access any employment opportunities (Stone *et al,* 2003; Battu *et al*, 2004).

Socio-economically deprived youth faced the double-bind of spatial and skills mismatch (Green *et al.* 2005) On the one hand they face the challenges of geographic mobility where they do not have the necessary resources to travel to find work or to travel to work. The extension of this is that, even if they are located in local areas that are accessible to employment opportunities, socio-economically deprived youth will have less chance of getting employment because of their limited skills base. Furthermore, spatial mismatch goes beyond a narrow focus on geographic access, in that socio-economically deprived youth will not necessarily have access to information about opportunities that exist outside of their local context, and may therefore be bound to opportunities within their immediate context due to 'imperfect information' rather than unwillingness to travel to work. (ibid)

In this context the role of employment intermediaries are an important resource can serve a critical bridging role in supporting young people to find employment. These services can include a database, job-brokering, transport assistance and networks, amongst others. The challenge, however, is that private sector employment agencies tend to ignore the lower-skilled strata of workers because this group is not profitable (NBIdeas, 2008). This has been evident in research done by Marock and Gewer (2008). Therefore, there is a general tendency towards some form of partnership or outsourcing model, where the state can play a role in ensuring the needs of all learners are being addressed. While the intermediary function will not address the inevitable challenge of low employment growth, it can create a mechanism for enhanced access to where the demand is.

The youth labour market context in South Africa
It is a well-published fact that labour force growth in South Africa has placed pressure on the labour market, which has been unable to respond with sufficient employment opportunities for first-time entrants (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2006). In 2006, the population of the country was around 47 million, 79% of whom are African (Woolard and Woolard, 2008). A large proportion of this population, particularly amongst Africans, is in the 0-19 years range, indicating the scale of young people that will be entering the labour market in the near future. Generally, the African population is young, with a median of 22, compared to the white population which has a median of 39 years. Therefore a large portion of pressure on the labour market is coming from young Africans, and this group demonstrates the lowest rate of employment growth

of all population groups in post-apartheid South Africa, and in particular for African females (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2006). The stability in the youth unemployment rate over the first decade of democracy further suggests that the economy has not been successful in creating jobs for young people (Burger and Woolard, 2005).

There is a perception that the increasing exposure of the South African economy to the global market has increased the demand for higher-level skills, and low-skilled workers have become increasingly redundant, across a range of economic sectors (Pillay, 2003). Employment creation in the labour market since the onset of democracy has been largely in the tertiary sector, mostly in financial and business services and internal trade (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2008). This has been followed by strong job creation in the manufacturing and construction sector, of which the latter requires a mixed set of skills. It is also noted that while there has been contraction in job creation in mining and agriculture, a large number of low and semi-skilled jobs have been created in areas such as office cleaning, security, taxi driving, personal services and restaurants (Altman and Marock, 2008). Therefore, as Kraak (2003) asserts, the increased demand for high skills is not fully diffused across the labour market and traditional labour-intensive work practices continue despite the introduction of new technologies.

Despite this, having a national senior certificate no longer seems to improve employment prospects and even having a tertiary qualification does not guarantee employment. As indicated previously, this has been found to have a particularly adverse effect on African jobseekers. Although employment growth was highest amongst youth with completed secondary education, followed by tertiary education, Africans in these categories are significantly more likely to be unemployed. As such, racial inequality appears to continue to plague the labour market. Bhorat and Oosthuizen (2006) ascribe this to three possible factors: persistent racial discrimination, perceptions amongst employers of poor quality in the educational institutions attended by many Africans and a significant number of Africans completing qualifications in fields where demand is low.

The large numbers of matriculants that exit the education system and do not enroll in some form of post-school education and training is a significant challenge for the state as it has the potential to further entrench long-term unemployment for youth. The danger is that the longer unemployment or underemployment lasts, the harder it is to reverse the effects on the individual (Rankin *et al.*, 2007), thus creating an ever increasing pool of unemployed youth. The literature suggests returns to education for those with post-school training of some type, while those with a national senior certificate or lower qualification will have declining returns (Keswell & Poswell, 2004 in Altman and Marock, 2008).

The labour market context therefore suggests that African youth feel the dual pressure of a generally unfriendly youth labour market, perceptions that the quality of education in educational institutions attended by many Africans is low and a continued bias towards white skilled individuals. As such inequality continues to be embedded in the labour market. Addressing the lack of access that Africans face with regards to the labour market will require interventions that enhance the quality of institutions that these young people attend and then changing the perception about the kinds of qualifications they are receiving (Bhorat and Oosthuzen, 2006).

A further concern that needs to be considered is that the education system has not produced the right kinds of skills needed to meet the demand: thus while the labour market cannot absorb the supply of labour, there continue to be large areas of vacancies which cannot be filled because of skills shortages. This suggests the need

to also give greater attention to the subjects that young people complete at school and the pathways that they are encouraged to follow once they have attained a general education.

Current supply of employability skills
It is estimated that there are around 1-million young people entering the labour market every year (Marock, 2008). In 2007, 370,000 young people exited the secondary schooling system with a national senior certificate[3] of whom around 85,000 passed with endorsement. It is estimated that around 65,000 enter into public Higher Education Institutions each year (Breier and Mabizela, 2008).

Of the 285,000 who do not get a matric endorsement, it is assumed that some go to public or private FET Colleges, while others may go to private HE. Some will attempt to enter the labour market and some will form part of the labour force that is not studying further or looking for work. There is no absolute clarity on what happens to these youth (ibid.). FET Colleges currently account for a small percentage of learners going into post-school education. The introduction of the National Certificate (Vocational), made up of 11 vocational programmes, in 2007 is targeted predominately at Grade 9 school-leavers. The total enrolment for these new programmes in 2007 was 25,000, although the Department of Education is pushing to double this by 2009 (DoE Strategic Plan 2007-2011).

Beyond formal education and training providers there is also a range of organizations or institutions that provide interventions that are geared to supporting youth to become more employable. These range from life skills programmes and career guidance to workplace exposure to active matching of jobseekers with employers, combined with a work placement intervention (Marock, 2008). Marock and Gewer (2008) found that many of the interventions available were focused primarily on the development of life skills and career guidance. While organizations claimed to place young people, there was little evidence of interventions that actively matched young people to employment opportunities and were successful in getting these young people placed. As such, the available interventions do not seem to add value to resolving the employment challenge.

Summary and implications
The literature on employability and school to work transitions reflects the complexity of developing effective policy and programmes to support youth, particularly in a context of social inequality and unemployment. Brewer (2004) outlines criteria for good practice for youth training emerging from studies of 50 projects that have been successful in addressing unemployment and underemployment amongst youth. These issues, as well as others raised by the projects highlighted already in this literature review include:

- High level of co-ordination amongst social partners (Cintefor) – ensuring that government, training institutions and employers understand their roles and are adhering to the principles of the programme, and there are systems in place to adequately measure progress.
- Co-ordination and commitment from key partners (government, community groups and others) will ensure the sustainability of the programme. This must be ensured at all stages of design, implementation and review.
- It is considered critical that there is agreement amongst the partners as to who the target group is and what the criteria for selection should be so as to ensure adequate targeting of participants (Betcherman et al., 2007) so that

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[3] According to 2007 matric results produced by Department of Education

the programme reaches the right people. However, it is noted that this is often difficult in developing countries because of a range of dynamics, such as geography, availability of resources and funding.

- Further, the design of programmes should take the sources of social exclusion of the particular target group(s) into account so that interventions can be more effectively targeted. Thus for example, there should be a sound and well-structured gender-sensitive needs assessment to ensure that the programme is designed in a manner that meets the needs of the target group.
- Programmes should cover a wide range of skills needed for workplace with a particular emphasis on job readiness and job search skills.
- There should be social support networks, during and following training, most commonly career counseling; guidance; job placement; mentoring/ coaching; technical assistance; and provision of market information. This support should also take the needs of particular target groups into account.
- Financial support mechanisms such as microcredit, flexible loans and/or grants are needed, particularly for impoverished groups.
- There is a need for creative investment in and use of physical infrastructure, especially to address the rural/urban divide.
- Using market mechanisms to attract training providers (Cinterfor) The focus here must be on balancing targeting and quality – ensuring the providers can reach the right groups but also that the providers can deliver the necessary quality of training. This contributes to the development of an occupational skills market
- Careful monitoring of needs and expectations of beneficiaries and employers to ensure the programme is achieving its goals. This also ensures that corrective measures can be taken to improve quality and make the training more relevant.

Finally, it is noted that for these programmes to succeed there is a need for mechanisms to be put in place to ensure adequate information sharing and awareness raising, particularly aimed at dispelling misconceptions around youth issues and to raise awareness around the services available.

These points illustrate the trends emerging internationally which suggest the need for more comprehensive approaches that integrate theory and practice, and provide support with job placement. Further, the research suggests the need to ensure that programmes are reaching the right target groups, are gender sensitive and are cost effective. In addition, there must be effective monitoring and evaluation systems in place which are responsive to the needs of participants and can address shortcomings when they arise. This should be an inclusive process so that it reinforces commitment and co-operation amongst partners. However, this section has noted that the success achieved by these programmes is complicated by labour market realities, particularly where there are insufficient workplaces to absorb youth or where the informal economy is dominant.

For the purposes of this report, the research will assess whether the extent to which the programmes have met some criteria for good practice and to what extent this good practice has achieved favorable employment outcomes. This investigation will assist in developing a set of refined criteria that particularly suit the South African labour market context.

3 ANALYSIS OF THE TRACER STUDY

This section of the report provides an analysis of the findings from the learner tracer studies. It includes the perspectives of the 50 learners that were interviewed and provides an indication as to:

- The opportunities that the learners have accessed when they completed a programme delivered through a project supported by SSACI;
- The extent to which the learners believe that the programme enabled them to access these opportunities.

Further, where learners have found employment their employers were also interviewed to provide further insights into:

- The extent to which to which the programme effectively prepared the learners to access and retain employment and perform to the standards required by employers.

In the final section of this report these perspectives will be considered together with the findings from the case studies in order to extrapolate the key themes emerging. The final section also explores the extent to which the model implemented through SSACI projects is achieving the requisite results and can contribute to the body of knowledge pertaining to vocational education and training and the manner in which this can be effectively aligned with the needs of the workplace so as to enhance the employability of young people.

3.1 NATURE OF THE SAMPLE

This section provides a profile of the learners that were interviewed as part of the tracer study.

This breakdown enables the reader to understand the extent to which the sample is representative in terms of the total population of learners that have accessed programmes within SSACI supported projects.

Further, it provides the reader an understanding as to nature of these learners and their family context: specifically it highlights the issues that need to be taken into account when considering whether young people can be expected to have a social network that can assist these learners to access employment.

3.1.1 Race and Gender Profile
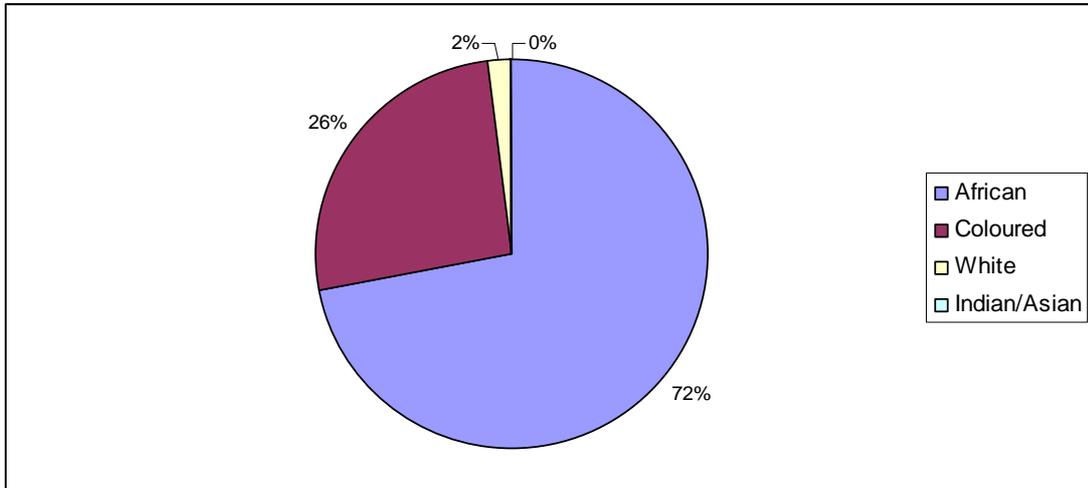
The pie chart provided highlights that the majority of the learners that were interviewed are African with a smaller percentage being Coloured. It is noted that there was a small percentage of White learners and an insignificant number of Indian/Asian learners.
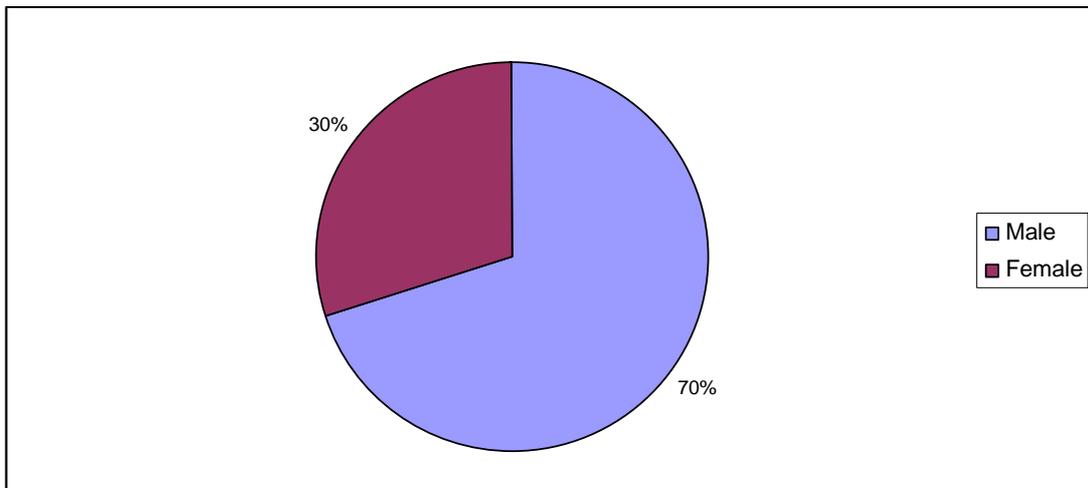
Further, the majority of the individuals interviewed are men and only 30% are women.

3.1.2 Programmes Completed within the SSACI Project

The learners that were interviewed were drawn from a range of programmes which led to the following qualifications

- Computer technician (A+)
- Financial Management (Diploma)
- Bachelor of Social Work – University of Zulu Land
- Medicine – University of Kwa Zulu Natal (Mosvold)
- B – Cur Degree (Nursing)
- Bachelor of Technology in Optometry – University of Johannesburg
- Bio - Medical Technology – Durban University of Technology
- Electrical Engineering (Heavy Current)
- Motor Mechanics
- Hospitality
- Mechanical Engineering (Diploma)

3.1.3 Geographical Location of Learners

The graph provided shows that the majority of learners interviewed were from WC, Gauteng and then Kzn.

Province where Learners Grew Up and Provinces where Currently Living

Province	Grew Up	Current
EC	6	3
FS	3	3
GP	9	16
KzN	9	6
LP	1	1
MP	6	1
NC	0	1
NW	2	2
WC	13	17

3.1.4 Highest Qualification of Parents

Highest Qualification of Parents

	Primary school or less	Some Secondary	Matric	College Cert	Diploma	Degree	Don't know
Father	12%	30%	8%		2%	0%	48%
Mother	12%	40%	8%	4%	6%	0%	28%
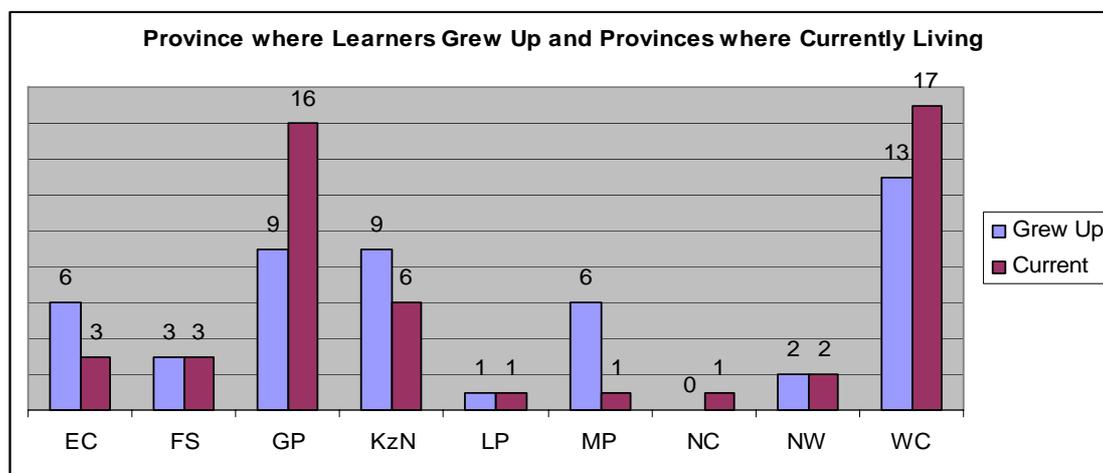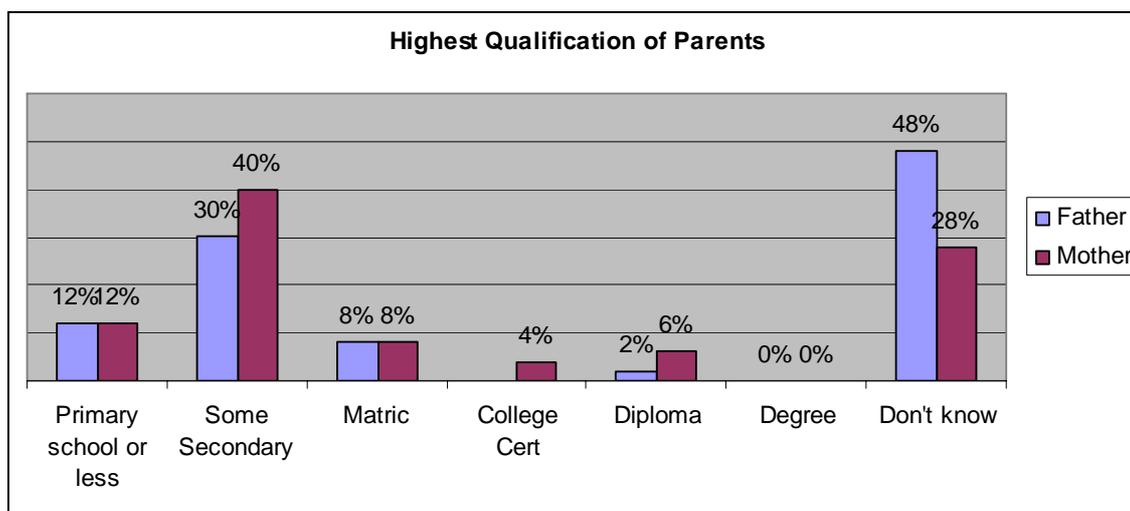
This graph illustrates the large number of parents that do not have a Grade 12 certificate. This can be contrasted with the learners interviewed all of whom had a Grade 12 certificate.

3.1.5 Current Employment Status of Parents

Current Employment Status of Parents

	Empl. Professional	Empl. Shop/Office/Factory	Self-Employed	Unemployed	Pensioner	Don't Know	Deceased
Father	4%	26%	6%	18%	16%	6%	24%
Mother	12%	20%	12%	40%	14%	2%	0%
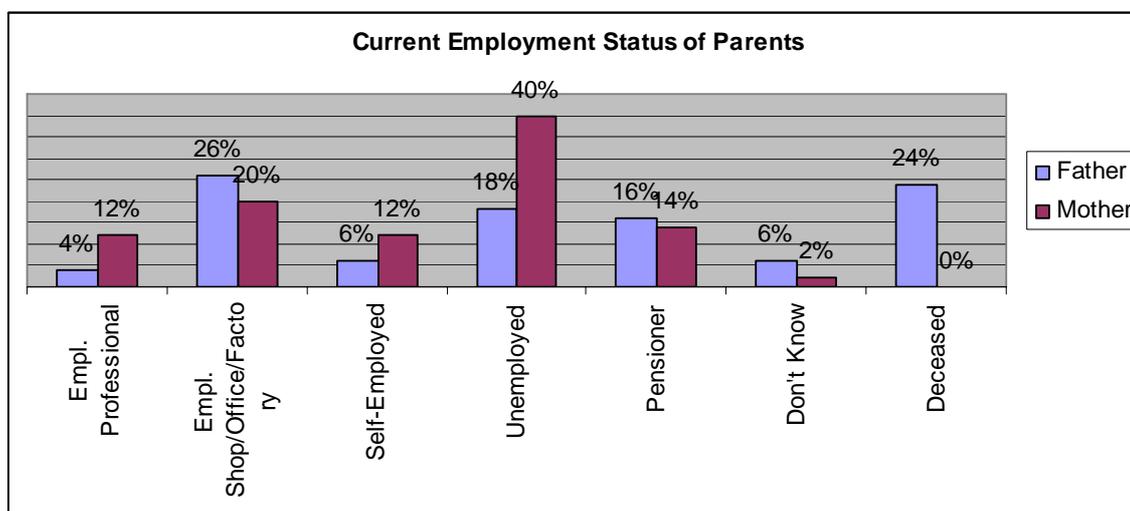
This graph then highlights the employment status of the parents. While this is quite diverse it can be seen that a large percentage of the parents are unemployed with large numbers deceased.

These figures combined with the previous graph highlight the extent to which SSACI is supporting learners that are likely not to have the type of social network emphasised by the literature as being critical for accessing employment. This issue will be discussed further in this report.

3.2 PERCEPTIONS OF THE VOCATIONAL PROGRAMME OR QUALIFICATION COMPLETED

This section provides an overview of the feedback provided by interviewees about: the quality of the programme, the perceived level of support offered to learners, the extent to which practical experience is integrated into the programme and that the programme was perceived by learners to prepare them for the world of work.

3.2.1 Perceptions of the Quality of the Programmes

	1 Very Bad	2	3 Average	4	5 Very Good
Quality of classroom teaching			2%	74%	24%
The programme level			10%	74%	16%
The pace of learning			16%	72%	12%
The time that the programme was offered		2%	26%	56%	16%
Relevance				24%	76%
Content of textbooks			34%	40%	26%
The lecturers had enough knowledge of subject matter			6%	44%	50%
Content of lecturer handouts	2%		36%	48%	14%
Access to computers	4%	6%	42%	24%	24%

These figures highlight high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the programme. It suggests that the only areas where there are any concerns about quality pertain to the content of the lecturer handouts and the extent to which learners have access to computers.

3.2.2 Perceptions about the Level of Support Offered by the Provider

	1 Very Bad	2	3 Average	4	5 Good	No Response
Help with language problems			8%	76%	6%	4%
Help with study methods			42%	40%	14%	4%
Guidance on which courses to choose		6%	50%	30%	10%	4%
Counselling support for personal problems		46%	26%	14%	10%	4%

This section considers the level of support that learner's report that they received during the programme. It suggests that there is average to higher support with language problems, study methods and guidance on which courses to choose. However, there is a real concern about the level of counselling support for personal problems. This issue re-emerges in the case studies and the extent to which this element should be built into programmes will be considered further in this report.

3.2.3 Perceptions about Access to Practical Experience

	1 Very Bad	2	3 Average	4	5 Good
Opportunities to practice new skill in classroom		10%	12%	62%	16%
Access to practical workshops	8%	16%	12%	46%	18%
Quality of practical equipment	10%	16%	12%	26%	18%

This graph illustrates that 78% of the learners stated that they have been given fairly good or good access to practice new skills and this figure increased to 90% including those learners that indicate that they have average access. However 24% of learners state that they have not had access to practical workshops and 26% state that they are not that happy with the quality of the practical equipment.

3.2.4 Perceptions about the extent to which the Programme Prepared Learners for the World of Work

	1 Very Bad	2	3 Average	4	5 Good
You went on visits to workplace environments	10%	30%	16%	34%	10%
You were provided with ideas around job opportunities	2%	12%	38%	38%	10%
Employers came to speak to you at the campus	10%	32%	20%	22%	16%
The materials gave examples from the workplace	4%	10%	48%	28%	10%
Guidance on career or employment opportunities	2%	18%	48%	20%	12%
Lecturer developed your confidence that you will get employed			12%	64%	24%
Lecturer showed you how to apply what you learnt in the workplace			6%	70%	24%
Lecturers provided you support in contacting employers		18%	46%	22%	14%
Lecturers provided you support in preparing you for interviews with employers		28%	40%	22%	10%
Lecturers provided you support in preparing job applications		36%	40%	14%	10%

The above graph provides a mixed picture of the extent to which learners feel they were prepared to enter the world of work. Of concern is that only 38% of the learners felt that the materials gave higher than average examples from the workplace and only 32% of learners indicated that they had higher than average access to career guidance. This answer was reinforced by learner perceptions of the extent to which lecturers assisted them to contact employers (only 36% more than average), to prepare for interviews (only 32% more than average) and support in preparing job applications (only 24% more than average).

These findings are given expression in the following comments which suggest that learners want additional information and practical support to access placement opportunities.

Information and resources are two critical areas of intervention that I need at this point as it is quite difficult to get access to new and fresh information as per area of

my residence because it is a bit out of towns, it is a rural farmstead. The other thing is the issue of resources as it is quite difficult and costly to facilitate issues of employment seeking, even if it is starting a small business.

The college should provide more opportunities of exposure and guidance to learners who are about to graduate, as that would go a long way in assisting them to secure either business or employment opportunities.

If there could be an organization or people who could assist us with the money or at least facilitating the process of job hunting by either paying for the related costs or assisting us with the necessary logistical support in securing employment. They could provide transport and also help us in typing and reproducing our documents i.e. CV's Personal Profiles etc, They could also speak to big companies on our behalf so that they may consider personnel from areas such as Hammanskraal and even to come down and advice young people on the kind of things they are looking for when taking people into their employ.

Learners also indicate that they would like to be linked with companies so that they can access employment and further development.

I think SSACI should also explore ways of linking us with companies that they know or form part of their association as it could be worth their while to do that because they have spent a lot of money by training us, it is only fair and proper that they care about our professional development going forward

Probably if they had linked us to IT companies that might possibly employ us it could have been better as that could have somehow increased our chances of getting employment

They could have linked us to the employment companies and explored possibilities of placing us in those companies as it could have provided us with more skills and experience that could have been useful at a time of our job hunting.

However one learner stated that they had been placed but it was conditional on them passing a subsequent exam. This did not work out and as a result the learner lost the opportunity.

After getting my Diploma, I got a student contract with the Department of Health in Kwa Zulu Natal and it was a contract that was conditional to me passing my board exam and since I haven't been able to do well in that regard, the Department has since terminated the contract, so I am still working hard on preparing for my board exam and I guess it entirely depends on me to do well and secure a full time employment after that, I don't think it has anything to do with the support from anyone or anything, I have beem provided with enough support already

Another learner stated that some of the concerns could have been addressed if there was clear exit strategy for them upon programme completion,

I think it could have been better for the training provider to have had an exit strategy for learners that were going to graduate and that strategy should have either prepared us for employment or small business development. They could have organized with companies to take some people after the programme as part of their on job training or workplace training as others could have been employed by those companies based on their performance. They could have also explored a possibility of assisting learners who have desires and ambitions of owning small businesses with business registrations and also business plans and things like procurement procedures i.e. how to tender - express interest to a tender – express interest to a proposal or apply for business loans.

This need to consider carefully what the options are upon completion was echoed by other learners some of whom stated that they wish to initiate a small business and that there had not been a process for support such initiatives. This is reflected in the comment below,

> *At this point, I would want to start my own business and help out other people within my area as there isn't a source of information like a Cyber Café or Internet shop where people could link up with the world and empower themselves with information, so I need funding or startup capital so as to further develop myself into a medium or a macro enterprise*

In contrast to this, another learner commented that the programme had played a critical role in preparing them for a small business,

> *I guess I have always had some entrepreneurship skills but I never got to be aware of how powerful and useful they could become when those skills are unleashed and the training has actually helped me with that*

This concern re career guidance and actual support with placement and support for activities that learners wish to undertake after the programme is complete is considered critical. However, the extent of the concerns expressed needs to be read within the context of the finding that 72% of the learners have accessed some form of employment and the high percentage of learners that indicate that they access employment through the assistance of a provider.

Interviewees explain this apparent contradiction by saying that while they were assisted to find a placement, many of which led to employment, and to access jobs: they indicate that this was not preceded by career guidance. They suggest that they were simply allocated to the job that the provider could access. However, as will be shown in the next section it appears that these jobs are quality jobs and the majority relate to the qualifications that interviewees completed though the SSACI supported project. Therefore this issue requires further consideration and will be explored within the context of the case studies and in the concluding section of this report.

3.3 ACCESS TO WORK OPORTUNITIES

During the interviews it was reported by learners that 36 of the 50 learners have accessed some form of work opportunity. Of these 32 reported that they were employed by an organisation, 3 reported that they were self-employed and 1 reported that they were assisting someone else in a small business.

3.3.1 The nature of the employment that learners have accessed

Based on 36 responses:

What Kind of Employer do you Work for?
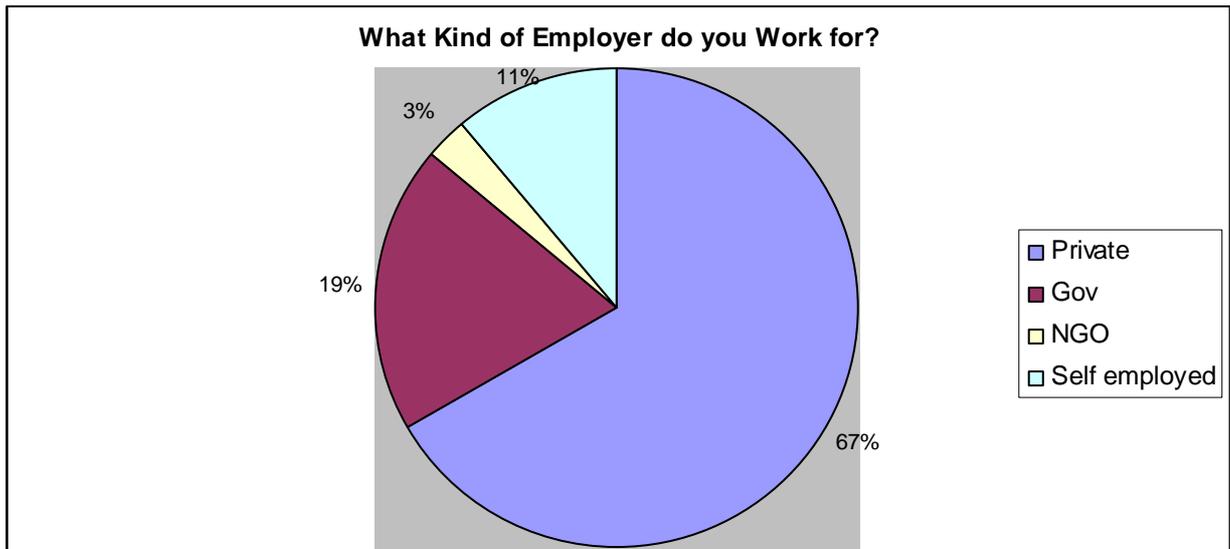
Learners indicated the range of jobs that they have found which includes: medical doctor, nurse, social workers, credit advisor, finance clerk, book-keeper, foreign exchange consultant, student constable, apprentice (motor mechanic, electricians, fitter and turner, fork lift driver), instrumentation technician, IT director, logistic operator, administrator, store manager, sales executive, barman, waiter, wine steward, front desk receptionist, chef, and promoter.

3.3.2 Level of Earnings

Based on 36 responses, the following picture emerged:

Earnings Before Tax in Rands
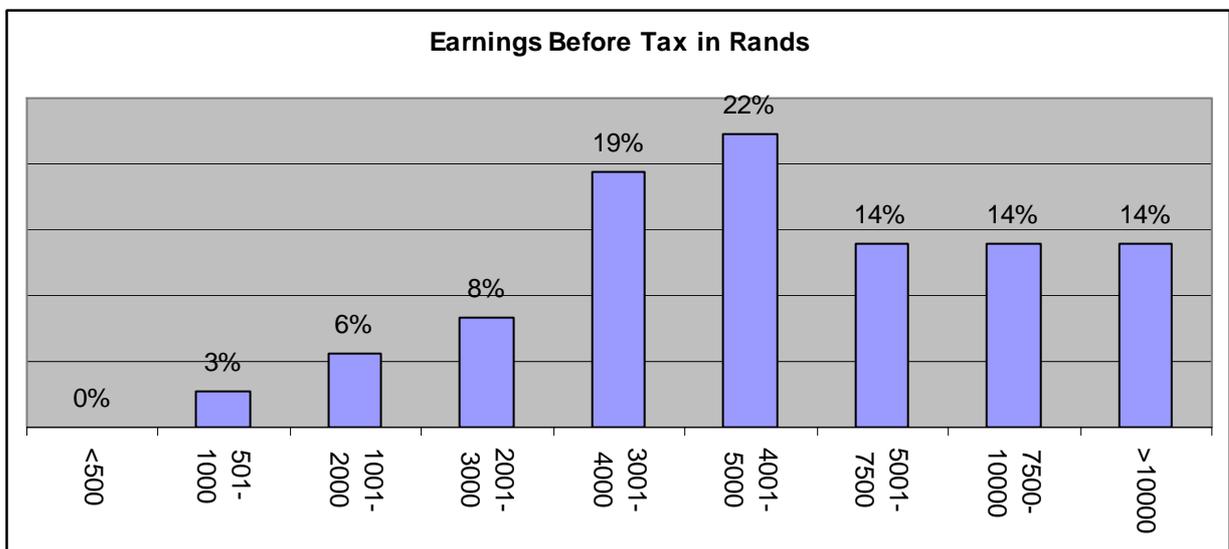
This graph suggests that learners are accessing quality jobs, and this finding is reinforced by the table (on the following page) which states that 66% of graduates are above average satisfied with their current job and this percentage increases to 92% if one includes those people that indicated that they are satisfied to an 'average' level:

	1 Very Bad	2	3 Average	4	5 Good
Your overall level of satisfaction with your current job	2%	6%	26%	46%	20%

Again, this reinforces the view that the jobs that individuals attain are relevant.

3.4 ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT

This section considers the factors that learners consider important for accessing employment and the ways in which learners accessed this employment.

3.4.1 Factors that learners report were important in enabling them to access the Work Opportunity

The table below suggests that learners emphasise the importance of having a matric (83%) and the need for references from people (77%). Learners also suggest that life skills obtained in the qualification were important factors in enabling them to access employment though this to a lesser extent (57%).

	1 Very Bad	2	3 Average	4	5 Good
Having matric			17%	19%	64%
Life skills obtained in qualification		3%	40%	49%	8%
Technical skills obtained in qualification		15%	18%	41%	26%
Practical work experience gained in studies		18%	32%	32%	18%
Help provided by institution for job interview	8%	38%	24%	15%	15%
References from people who know me		6%	17%	43%	34%

Of interest is that while learners were not asked to review the selection process and the manner in which the selection of learners influenced the outcome of the programme, the majority of learners comment that they entered a learning programme in the area that that they wish to pursue in the long term.

Many interviewees commented that having completed the programme and entered employment they were confident that they had selected the appropriate pathway. Most of these learners stated that they had entered the programme knowing what they wanted to do and had not changed their minds,

> *It hasn't changed as I have been having this career goal since from childhood; I guess I have always been fascinated by computers and what they are actually about*

However, others stated that the programme had shifted their perspective,

> *I didn't grow up with the love for computers and the related systems and mechanics, the training influenced the change as it was then that I realized that I have a deeper liking and passion for the ICT sector*

Another interviewee commented that,

27

Yes it has since changed after I completed the training with Vukani because I realized that there is so much that one can do or be within an IT sector, the industry offers so much it just depends on how far an individual is prepared to push Him/Herself.

Another interviewee stated that the time that they spent at the workplace had enabled them to make a decision about their career plans,

It has been changed since I started working here at Foschini and not by the training as such because I then started to discover of ways that I can personally use their space and tine to actually grow within the company

Never-the-less it is apparent from these responses that the selection of learners was able to ensure that the learners that entered the programmes were motivated and generally were already interested in the specific field in which they entered.

3.4.2 The way in which the Work Opportunity was accessed

How did you find first job?
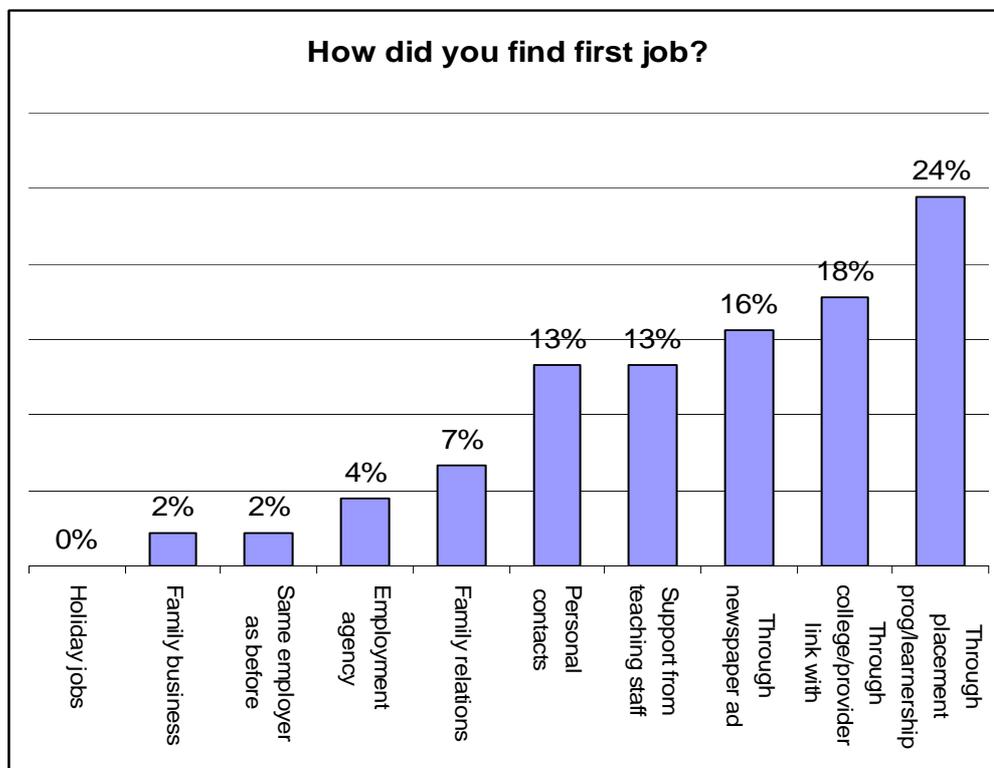
This table suggests that providers are assisting with access to employment (the graph illustrates that 42% of the learners were assisted through the provider and/or through a placement opportunity, with a further 13% indicating that they were assisted by lecturing staff). It is noted that this sits at odds with the previous table in which only 30% of the learners' state that the institutions assistance enabled them to access employment, and with the previous section in which learners state that they need more comprehensive support from providers.

The graph does confirm the view suggested by the learner demographics provided upfront which suggested that it was likely that family networks would only be able to play a limited role in assisting learners to access work.

In order to provide greater nuance to these responses, some of the comments that were received with regards to the ways in which the learners accessed opportunities are provided.

Critically, learners explained the way in which providers had assisted them,

> *Karen Hendricks from False bay College helped me to get a placement at the company and that's how I got to be formally employment after my assessment*

> *One of my trainers – lecturers motivated me to apply for an advert that Eskom had put on our notice board and then he also helped me with the application and that's how I got to be selected to be one of the people who were to be offered an apprenticeship by Eskom and I am proud to say that I am now in a full time job with Eskom and I love my job.*

> *I was advised by my college lecture to apply at the hotel as there was a vacancy available and I went for all the assessments and was offered a position in the company*

Others spoke of the way, in which the placement or internship component of the programme, enabled them to access employment,

> *I was linked to my employer through the job placement whilst I was studying there at the college and when I finished I was told that at the company where I was placed at were quite happy with me and they would want me to work for them.*

> *I was an intern at a hotel and at the time of my completion the company was experiencing a lot of staff turnover and I was amongst those that the company offered a job to, to replace some of the personnel that left the company.*

Other learners spoke more of the role that placement agencies had played in assisting them to access employment,

> *I registered with Smiles Selections employment agency and then they submitted my profile to the company and that is how I got to be employed after they were satisfied with my credentials.*

> *I sent my profile to the agency and afterwards I was then assessed by the agency and then they sent me for interviews at the Folateng Private Unit at the Hospital and that is how I then got to be offered the job.*

Others indicated that,

> *I applied for an advertisement on the paper and then I was called in for interviews and assessments and that's how I got the job*

And one learner indicated that they had been asked to form a business with staff from the college,

> *The College Lecturer and Head of Department resigned from the college after our programme there and they took me with as they started their company and I have learn a lot from them in terms of running a small to a medium company from the start and after things were not okay between themselves and they split I decided to start my own company and I was lucky that I found partner who similarly shared the kind of vision I had, and I thought it could be worthwhile to try something out together and I must say it has been quite a learning and fulfilling experience.*

This section highlights the myriad of ways in which learners report that they have been assisted: as indicated this appears to be incongruent with the views expressed by learners that they needed more guidance and counselling and that they had not been sufficiently supported to access employment. This suggests that this is a very mixed picture which varies across programmes.

3.5 EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROGRAMME PREPARES LEARNERS TO ENTER THE WORKPLACE

28 of 36 (77%) reported that their job is related to SSACI qualification and remaining reported that it was not. Where individuals stated that it was not they indicated that this was because they had not found a job linked to their qualification; and three of these individuals commented that they felt that the job that they had found would provide them with better opportunities.

Examples: The opportunities that individuals found relating to their qualification.

I repair vehicles and maintain the fleet of South African Police Service that is within our district.

I provide admin support to the hospital by way of admitting, discharging patients, billing and analyzing their receipts and also providing a financial reckon to the financial manager

I am responsible for all orders, the day to day running of the books and ensuring that all customers are quite content with the service that we provide and lastly providing the financial manager with the administrative support in relations to the financials of the company

I capture invoices, reconcile statements, time sheets and prepare documentation for payments and I also provide administrative support to the unit.

I provide finance related admin to the unit and all ensure that all resources are accounted for by way of taking stock on a regular basis and also communicating resource related issue with the other units in the children's care departments

As a Director and partner of a medium size company, I need to make sure that all systems are up and running , that all clients are properly maintained and serviced at all times and that I continue to market the company and ensure on quality service so that, that becomes a trademark that will market the company to new and potential clients

I work in a workshop assisting qualified artisans with their work, whilst learning form what they are doing as I also want to become a fully qualified Mechanical Engineer, although my long term goal is to become a mechanical designer or drafter

I work with a team of people to manufacturer different parts of the Machines that are used for fitting and turning and then afterwards we will then assemble all the different parts that we have made to construct big pump machines and other related machines

I check in guests, make reservations for companies and people who book via e-mail, help out with house keeping , I also do stock taking and ordering.

Stock taking, stock packing, cleaning and bar-tending

I am mostly working on the field with transformers and metering boxes, supplying customers and I sometimes work at the mini sub stations to attend to any defaults that have been detected.

I am working at the resuscitation unit, providing support to any emergency case that needs care within the hospital

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> I work with a team of nurses and a senior nurse in providing medical care in the hospital and this means diagnosing patients and referring those that need referrals and also working with the administrative site of the hospital in providing health or cases statistics that are required.
>
> My company provides electrical support work to everyone including individuals, households and bigger to smaller companies; this may include fixing electrical appliances, to wiring and fitting of heavy duty electrical equipment.
>
> I am currently working with our branches in getting the profiles of people who are having international trading and also having investments with other off shore banks as I turn to alert them when the money has been deposited on their accounts and other matters relating to their accounts and also attend to any queries that might be raised by either our branches or clients directly.

The examples in this box point to the range of opportunities that have been accessed depending on the nature of the programme that the learner undertook. What it also speaks to is the quality of jobs that individuals have accessed and the extent to which individuals are being given responsibilities which enable them to apply their skills. This is expanded upon in the next section of this report.

3.6 HAVE YOU CHANGED JOBS SINCE SSACI STUDIES?

Interviewees were also asked whether they had changed jobs since completing the SSACI supported project. Of the 36 interviewees that had indicated that they had accessed an economic opportunity 8 (22%) stated that they had changed jobs. Of thse 8 6 interviewees stated that they had changed jobs once, 1 had changed jobs twice and another had changed jobs three times.

Of the 8 who reported having changed jobs, most reported that their previous job was not permanent, and that they had found better paying jobs. One indicated that he changed jobs as a result of finding employment that better suited his qualifications.

3.7 RATING OF USE OF SKILLS AND JOB SATISFACTION

Related to the previous issue, interviewees were asked about the extent to which they were able to utilise the skills that they had acquired during the programme in their workplace. The following picture emerged:

	1 Very Bad	2	3 Average	4	5 Good
The extent to which you are using the skills and knowledge gained during your studies		17%	9%	51%	23%

This rating scale is reinforced by the comments received. These are too numerous to reproduce in this report, so only a few of these quotes are provided below.

> *The financial management that I did at the college empowered me with the skills of knowing how to calculate variances, do bookkeeping and also doing financial reconciliations amongst other things and my job here requires me to do exactly that.*

Another stated that,

> *The financial management skills and competencies have helped me to contribute to the financial well being of our company as I have managed to help out in sorting out some of the financial issues that we are confronted with on a daily basis.*

And other commented that,

> *I am currently applying everything that I have learnt from the college as it is linked to my daily responsibilities, especially the technical side of things. I am fixing computers everyday and also applying myself to find new if not refined solutions to some of the technical queries that our clients have. I am also grateful that the programme assigned a Mentor for me that would assist me with some of areas that had to do with the general management and marketing of the company and that has been quite useful as I continue to apply those learning's and experience in my day to day engagements.*

Another stated that,

> *I have learned catering skills and how to prepare the best food for customers and I am happy that I am able to practice what I have learned from the hospitality programme.*

However, other interviewees stated that they had not been able to apply their skills as anticipated. One commented that,

> *The only limited way of using my skills in my current workplace is through working my way into different systems and also assisting my unit with rebooting programmes where necessary and also check some computers when they are a bit slow, although I am not paid for that job as there is an IT company that is contracted to provide that support. I only help out as it is something I enjoy doing.*

This concern was shared by another interviewee who stated that,

> *I have a limited opportunity of using my skills in the workplace as the company I am working for is just a security company and my limited access to IT refers to when I need to upload employees information and also register them with the department of Labour, as that is done using computer programmes.*

This section suggests that the majority of interviewees are able to apply their skills as a central component of their occupation, and suggests that even those who are not employed directly to work in areas related to their training are finding ways to utilise their skills.

In addition to the technical skills acquired interviewees were also asked about the extent to which they were able to apply certain core skills in the workplace. These answers are reflected in the table below:

	1 Very Bad	2	3 Average	4	5 Good
Computer skills		8%	19%	33%	39%
Health and safety		3%	53%	22%	22%
Mathematics		14%	22%	44%	19%
Teamwork		3%	22%	47%	28%
Communication				64%	36%
Problem-solving			8%	64%	28%

The table highlights that 92% of learners state that problem solving has been very important in the workplace, and 100% of learners believe that communication has been very important in the workplace. Interviewees spoke expansively on the value of these skills and provided details examples of the manner in which they have been able to use these skills. One interviewee commented that,

> *I have used the skills that I have got form my training in order for me to adapt in the workplace and also apply myself as part of a team whilst also learning a lot from people who are our mentors and that has been made possible by my ability of working with people and also understanding them.*

Another commented that,

> *All these skills are quite crucial when running a business as they are required to be practiced on a regular basis if one intends on running a professional company, hence I find myself relating to many of them on a day to day and they have become key areas of my managerial responsibilities and I have been challenge to execute accordingly, from communicating with clients to the actual fixing of computers as part of my daily work load.*

And another commented that,

> *As an Admin person, I happen to be first person that most people get to interact with when accessing the services in our unit therefore it has been mostly important to understand the people and have basic people skills so as to understand the type of people you are working with and how to deal with their problems that might include queries resulting from incorrect billing and analysis of their accounts hence it is important to have a sound background of Maths so as to avoid such mistakes. It has also been important to understand basic health issues as I am working in a health environment and health standards are upheld. I have also used my computer skills, communication skills and problem solving skills to first understand and work my way around the systems in the computer and also deal with clients complains so as to enable a conducive environment for everyone.*

Interestingly even those interviewees that had followed a more technical path emphasized the importance of these core skills,

> *I take that as a person who is at a workshop on a regular basis I try to be quite friendly and communicate with my team quite efficiently so that we are able to finish up working on the cars that the clients are expecting at the end of the day and also make sure that all safety standards are adhered to so as to compromise any emergence of unnecessary defaults.*

This view resonated with the perspective of another interviewee who stated that,

> *The most important skill in my current workplace has a lot to do with the ability to communicate and work in a team as the machinery that we work with is heavy so it is vital to operate within a team and also uphold the standards of safety, other skills are not that important as they are just cross cutting and are not necessarily the criteria, they are just add on abilities that one might have but not necessarily apply as your key performance areas.*

These comments emphasise the importance of the core skills over and above the technical skills. This issue is also raised by the employer interviews and will be discussed in the concluding section of this report.

3.8 FUTURE WORK PLANS

It emerged from the interviews that while the majority of interviewees have accessed a work opportunity, many of these interviewees have plans to progress either within their current workplace or in another. Many of their comments suggest that, despite any lack of career guidance that they may have expressed, that they have clear career goals and plans.

Interviewees stated that,

> *I am looking at exploring a managerial position where I am currently working as I am now thinking of enrolling for some management course next year with UNISA or some accredited recognized institutions*

> *My career goal is to move up within the company that I am working for now and become an Executive Manager or one of the Directors as I believe there is so much that I can still offer our company*

> *I want to go up the ladder and be positioned in a managerial position in some time to come and being able to influence certain things including policies that affects the nursing profession as the profession sometimes it is taken lightly and people who work within this profession sacrifices quite a lot for the well being of others*

> *I want to see myself working for a leading ICT company where I can directly apply some of my talents and knowledge and also explore possible ways of learning other things as ITC is an interesting field of work because it provides excellent opportunities for growth and learning*

Others stated that they wish to gain experience and then initiate a small business,

> *I want to be a software developer who is licensed by Microsoft and also work my way in some IT company with the view of ultimately opening my own company, where I would then provide technical support to other companies and also capacitate other people with systems and information on IT*

> *I want to see myself owning my own company which will be specializing in IT technical support and provide support to other IT companies and also provide employment to other young people in my area*

> *I want to run and own a Company after I have worked enough within the field of ICT and also get to employ a lot of young people in my area so that they can also further develop their in depth understanding and passion for ICT and also pave a way for other generations of young people to follow*

> *I am still learning more on the insights of running a business and actually keeping the accounts in a bigger company, so that I may also have enough experience as my dream goal is to own and run my own company that will specialize in financial matters either as a accounting or auditing firm.*

> *I want to open my open my own mechanical engineering workshop and then do designing and drafting as my specialties*

> *I want to get more experience within the health sector and probably establish myself as one of the nurses who are quite diligent in their work and also good in what they do as that could somehow start to put me out in the public space because that is where I am seeing myself in the future. I want to open up my care and medical centre that will service areas that the government can't reach out to as a way of*

complementing their efforts and also encouraging others to do something for their communities and not only expect the government to provide.

Yes it has changed as I have always thought it is easy running a company of your own but I have come to realize that it is not only as easy as it looks but it requires sufficient experience and hard work to start a company form start, I think the best option for one is to work and gather enough and sufficient contacts for times when they are needed in a company

Interestingly, many of the comments highlight suggests that learners wish to initiate their own businesses but understand the need to gain experience in a more formal environment prior to undertaking such an initiative. This is contrary to the views that are often expressed which suggest that young people are reluctant to run their own business and that young people tend to be reluctant to gain the relevant experience before entering the next phase of their career.

Other individuals stated that while they ultimately want to initiate a small business they need to establish a level of financial sustainability first,

I am planning to work for a big company for a while as that would keep me stable for a while and provide a security for my family and then wok my way within that company to re establish myself as s sub contractor maybe for Eskom, Telkom or Vodacom and then go on my own again as the economy could have got better at that time

I want to see myself employed or at least having a small company that supports big companies with ITC services, I guess I am pressed by my personal circumstances to secure employment soon so as to be able to respond to some of the challenges that I am currently dealing with

One individual that was self-employed stated that they are comfortable with their selected path but have aspirations to build their business,

My career goal is working hard in ensuring that my company becomes one of the leading companies in South Africa and also employ a lot more people whilst still enjoying the support of all concerned including key stakeholders and clients

These interviews suggest a highly motivated group of individuals and while the extent that this can be directly attributed to the SSACI supported project cannot easily be understood, it minimally suggests that the selection process was very effective and/or that the programme developed these attitudes.

3.9 ACCESS TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES SINCE COMPLETING THE SSACI PROJECT

To add further insights into this picture interviewees were asked whether they have accessed further studies since completing the SSACI sponsored project, whether there is interest in further study, and the level of support that learners report that they have received with regards to their studies.

3.9.1 Areas of Study

It was found that only a limited number of students were reportedly studying at the time of this research. Of these students it was found that:

- One student is studying for a BA Degree in Business Administration at Pinelands (Tsiba University for Graduates Students). This students was studying full time;
- Another student is studying Hospitality Management. This student is working and is being supported by the company. He reportedly uses the company's materials and the provider comes once a month to check on their work and progress from the workplace.
- Another student reported that he is currently completing a few subjects that were still lagging behind, "*that I did not complete them and I need to finish them and pass them so that I can get my Degree in Optometry Technology and I want to thank Mosvold for having provided me with the opportunity*".
- A forth student stated that the student is currently finishing a Nursing Degree at the University of Zulu Land. This programme is full time.
- And another student is currently studying project management and capacity building as critical supplements to social work. The student explained that this will assist them to access employment in the field of youth development "*as it has always been my passion to work in an environment that works with youth and empower them with some life skills and personal development techniques on how to approach life*".

3.9.2 Impetus for further study

Learners stated that they wished to study to achieve a higher qualification, so as to improve their chances and to earn more money. Comments include,

> *I am hoping to finish my degree in financial management and then aiming to establish myself as an account, where I can actually get a better job and also provide the support the support to the company of my employ in the area that I feel most comfortable*

> *I would like to study hotel management and further my studies in the hospitality field.*

> *I want to be a qualified artisan and further continue my studies to become a mechanical designer and a draft person*

> *I want to complete my diploma at a higher institution of learning and then become a fully qualified electrical engineer.*

> *I am hoping to become some Specialist in System Development and also explore ways of getting a startup capital so as to start my own initiative where I can provide technical support to many companies and individuals who are having particular issues or challenges with their systems*

> *After having completed some basics in the engineering of computers, I now intend to become a Software Engineer, that is certified by Microsoft and also to continue being Self Employed and have other people working for me*

3.9.3 Support received to access study opportunities

Who helped you make a decision about what to study?

Parent/relative	Teacher	College lecturer	Friend	None
8	2	4	4	38
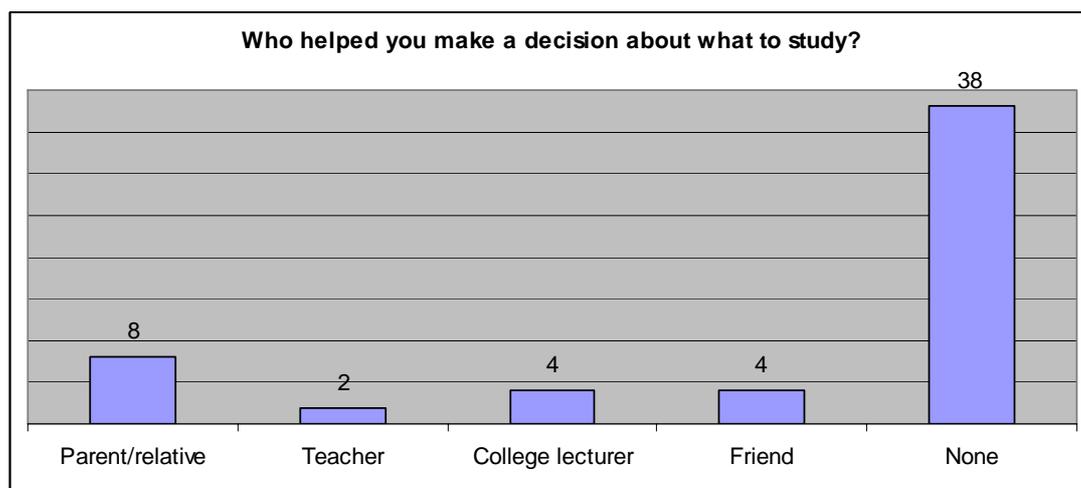
This graph indicated that the majority of interviewees stated that they had not been assisted to make a decision as to what to study once they had completed their existing programme. Some interviewees indicated that they would prefer to study at the institution that they completed the SSACI sponsored programme. Some of the interviewees stated that,

> *I think the college should either get more money to train us further so that we walk away with more recognized qualifications….*

> *Providing us with the chance to study further at a higher level and be better qualified for a good job.*

Other interviewees stated that although they had not received any direct assistance with their decision about what to study; they were able to develop a greater understanding about what they wished to study during the period that they were in the SSACI supported programme. Interviewees commented that,

> *In the beginning I only wanted to become an electrician but as I went with the course I realized and the lecturers also encouraged me to do the electrical engineering course as it has a lot of opportunities and I am also talented to become one*

> *I want to study further and do hospitality management to increase my chances of finding a job and to also improve on the skills I have already acquired from the programme.*

> *I am skilled in hospitality but I would like to get more skilled by studying further into the management field*

Other interviewees indicated that their workplace was assisting them to access further learning,

> *I want to continue studying hotel management and the hotel I work for will assist me to complete this course.*

This section suggests that some interviewees would value additional guidance with planning their learning pathway; however, other interviewees suggested that they had been able to determine their learning pathway. These interviewees suggest that

they have already begun to explore ways to access this learning. It also appears that in a few cases the employer has assisted the learner to access further learning.

3.10 IF YOU ARE UNEMPLOYED

As indicated previously, 14 interviewees had not successfully accessed a work opportunity. These interviewees were asked for the reasons why they feel that they have not yet managed to access employment. Of the group, 11 interviewees responded and the reasons that they gave for not having a job are provided in the graph below:

Main Reasons for Not Having Job

Reason	%
Don't have right skills	0%
Don't have high enough education level	0%
Don't have job	0%
I am still studying and don't want a	0%
Don't know how to look for job	0%
Not employment equity candidate	0%
Over qualified for job	0%
Recently graduated and looking	4%
Employers do not hire graduates	13%
Do not have acess to info on jobs	21%
Insufficient work experience	29%
No work opportunities where I live	33%

The graph suggests that the majority of interviewees state that they could not find an opportunity because there "are no work opportunities", however a few others stated that they felt that as a graduate without experience it was more difficult to find work. These issues will also be explored further in this report.

4 FINDINGS FROM EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS

This section was based on the 15 employer interviews. It serves to establish the perceptions of employers with regards to the manner in which they recruited the graduates from SSACI supported programmes and the extent to which they believe that these individuals were well prepared to perform their required functions.

4.1 DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Interviewees were also asked how long the graduate had been working for them. This was ascertained as it assists to contextualise certain of the answers provided in the following sections.

11 of the 15 employers indicate that the graduate has been working for them for more than one year. The breakdown is as follows:

6 x one year
3 x two years
2 x 3 years

The remaining 4 have been working with the employers for between 4 and 10 months:

3 x 4 months
1 x 10 months

4.2 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

Interviewees were asked how they recruited their graduates. The following picture emerged:

- 5 (one third) employers recruited the graduate through an advert

Interestingly, in their responses employers emphasised that the graduates had applied for a job and that they had been selected because they had impressed the selection team. Comments include,

> *He responded to an advert that the company put out for a vacancy and he was then called in for an interview for which he came and did very well hence I employed him.*

> *He responded to an advert that we advertised and he came in for interviews and he was then selected based on how he engaged with the panel*

Two interviewees stated that the individual was selected after the graduate had applied for the job based on an advert, but that the company had already identified this person as someone that the company would like to employ. The interviewee explained that,

> *He responded to an advert and he was also part of the students that were being head hunted from the colleges after they have completed.*

And the other employer stated that,

> *She applied to a newspaper advert, although she was asked to do so by one of our Directors.*

- 5 (one third) employers recruited the graduate through a work placement

Employers observed the following with regards to the employment of graduates after their placement was complete,

> *She first started out as a trainee and then afterwards she was offered a part time contract which is for three months and it has been renewed on a monthly basis.*

> *She was part of the interns that were placed at our hotel and at the time of her completion, she was fortunate that the company was experiencing a lot of staff turnover and she was amongst those that the company offered the jobs, to replace some of the personnel that left the company.*

- 5 (one third) employers recruited the graduate through either a placement agency or through personal networks.

Employers explained their usage of placement agencies as follows:

> *She was placed through a recruitment agency, as we normally get the agencies to recruit for us so I guess they get to advertise and then send people to us for interviews and that is how Daneel got to be selected from the bunch that she came with.*

Another interviewee state that they had employed the graduate on the recommendation of an individual that they worked with,

> *Her Husband is one of the people that I have been supplying my product to and when I told him that I am looking for someone to help with my books and accounts as I am now intending to grow and expand the company, he actually recommended his wife who was coincidentally part of the team that was sent through from the college for assessment for their placement activities.*

Employers were then asked if they manner in which they employed the graduates is consistent with their typical recruitment process. It was indicated that companies had followed their usual practice and many expressed satisfaction with the results that they have achieved through recruiting graduates through the colleges. This view is expressed by the following comment,

> *My company was just starting at that point and I didn't want to bring in people who didn't have the right skills or competencies hence I thought that going to the college would probably secure me someone who is competent but also hungry to make a success of H/Herself and I think it has worked, so I guess I will go through the college when I need more people as my company is also expanding.*

Other interviewees also indicated that they had followed their normal processes and emphasised that the graduates accessed employment because of the manner in which they performed during the selection process.

This section highlights the importance of the manner in which learners carry themselves during the placement component of the programme as well as the way in which they present themselves during a selection and interview process.

4.3 SELECTION: THE EXTENT TO WHICH SSACI GRADUATES HAD THE REQUISITE QUALITIES

Interviewees were asked which characteristics they considered to be important when determining whether to employ a candidate and the extent to which they believe the graduates from the SSACI projects could demonstrate these characteristics. A number of these quotes are reproduced here as they illustrate the required characteristics:

She demonstrated a fair understanding of the administrative role that she needed to provide to the unit and she also had a deeper understanding of the work environment as she could relate with a lot of policies that involved such as the finance policy and the human resource policy. I got a sense that I usually get with candidates from Senpower, that she was properly mentored and guided through before her engagement with the workplace.

He came out at the top with all his assessment activities and he also showed confidence in how he engaged with whatever he was tasked with, I can say he is a very balanced person as he is also assertive and learns fast also. I think he will go a long way in this industry as he also has people skills that allows him to work very well with people from across all sectors of life and he warms up very easy to people despite the fact that he doesn't know you or haven't been with you for a long time.

I could say that it is in his way of engaging with people, he has a very strong personality and presence and he is also well spoken and articulate at the same time, but also that he demonstrated a good understanding of the work through some of the activities that we gave him as part of his assessment and he is very thorough as a person and also very reliable and that comes through when you get to interact with him as he is also very easy to get along with.

She had a very good character that was backed by a strong attitude towards life and for me that was the thing that kept her shoulders above the rest as she was very confident and also efficient in whatever that she was doing as an assessment task.

She is very outspoken and competent in what she does, she is also not afraid of challenge and also responds very well to authority and instructions and that we saw during the time when she was a trainee in the company and that is how we got to be interested in her on a long term basis.

She is very competent in her work area and she is also very warm as a person and she also have people skills as she can communicate very well with other people and that is quite important in the hospitality sector as you interface and interact with a lot of people.

He came across as someone who is very selfless and humble but at the same time very competent and knowledgeable as he could easily relate with what we were engaging him on during his assessment, he also demonstrated a fairly acceptable personality which could be easy to work with in a work environment and he also struck us as a responsible someone. The other thing is that he demonstrated willingness to learn as the plant was new and the machinery that we were going to use were those that required us that train them first, before they could be assigned for duty.

He came across as a very keen person who also is very well spoken and had a very balanced understanding of the nature of business that we are in, he also demonstrated a strong character through the practical assessments activities that we gave him as part of the selection process.

adapt and get along with people and those were the key characteristics that actually convinced us that he will make a good sales executive as you need all of that to warm up to people that you meet so that they can be comfortable to have dealings with you as a person and the company as a secondary to that.

From the above it is clear that the key characteristics that employer interviewees valued include: effective communication skills and the ability to work within a team; a good attitude with regards to discipline and continual learning and development as well as the ability to undertake the work. This resonates with the ratings that interviewees gave with regards to the importance of different life skills. These are reflected upon below:

	1 Not Important	2	3	4	5 Very Important
Computer skills			3	6	6
Health and safety		1	3	4	7
Mathematics		2	5	7	1
Teamwork			2	4	9
Communication				5	10
Problem-Solving			4	4	6

This table suggests that interviewees rated life skills as very importance and as per the comments made in response to the question as to the qualities that are sought during a selection process; employers all stated that communication is either important or very important. In addition employers emphasised the importance of team work and health and safety skills.

4.4 IN THE WORKPLACE: THE EXTENT TO WHICH SSACI GRADUATES HAVE THE REQUISITE QUALITIES

The preceding section focused on the skills that employers seek and the extent to which it was felt that graduates from SSACI projects demonstrated these qualities in the selection process. This section outlines the perceptions of employers in terms of the graduates from SSACI projects once they entered the workplace.

Critically 80% of the employer interviewees viewed the preparedness of graduates to enter the workplace as above average to excellent. Further, 3 of the 15 (20%) report that skills on recruitment were excellent and 8 of 15 (53%) reported that skills on recruitment were above average. The 4 interviewees that rated the individuals' skills as average indicated areas in which they felt that the graduates could still develop and these comments are included in the next section.

The interviewees that stated that the individuals were above average to excellent expressed the following views:

She performed some of the tasks that are not necessarily falling within her responsibilities. I had thought that I would need to employ an administrator and possibly a receptionist, but she is doing all of that and very well if I have to say so.

He sometimes helped his peers whenever they were struggling to complete their tasks

> *She is excellent in her deliverables and she is also eager to learn and come up with creative ideas to supplement what she knows already from her studies.*

> *She is quite focused and very humble and that is very clear in how she carries herself even around other people that she is not used to or doesn't know.*

One of the interviewees indicated that they were so pleased with the graduate that they have in fact been promoted since entering the company. This graduate has been with the company for 3 years and the interviewee stated that,

> *He has been promoted from working with commissioning production to being a Store Manager, he was working more on the floor assisting with quality control checks and dispatching and because we saw that he had potential, we offered him a better job that has more responsibilities because we were convinced that he will deliver.*

Another stated that,

> *I think Mthokozisi is a brilliant young man who is very responsible and he has somehow become a role model and a beacon of hope for many young people in our area as we are also plagued by degrading activities that includes the abuse of alcohol and other forms of substances and criminal activities such as rape, so to have a young person like him who is so goal driven is actually encouraging and I also hope that he remains this dedicated and focused as that will go a long way in his career ambitions for the future*

Those interviewees that stated that the graduates' skills were above average were also very positive and are as follows:

> *There were no gaps that we could identify, he actually outdone himself in some of the assessments that we gave him to a point where we felt that he could be over qualified for the work that we were providing.*

> *She just fitted in the position without having someone who handed over or who mentored her through, we just basically showed her the basics of her job and she got on to do well without having to be monitored or closely supervised.*

> *Not really, as she demonstrated a very in depth understanding of the reception and administration area and she was doing quite well as a trainee as even customers or clients would make quite good comments about her and how she provides service, and that is quite important in our line of work.*

> *He demonstrated a fair understanding of the work that we do, I must say that I am lucky to have him as part of my team as he is very hard working and eager to learn more and he is not afraid of taking the initiative.*

These views were consistent with the response that interviewees gave about whether graduates skills were aligned with their needs. It was found that 80% rated the level of alignment as above average or well aligned. Further, 74% of employers stated that the lifeskills of the graduates were of an above average or excellent level.

Finally, the evaluation team probed whether this level of preparedness and competence is consistent or different from other graduates that companies may employ. It was found that while some of the interviewees stated that their selection process is sufficiently thorough that their candidates are all of a similar quality. However a few interviewees stated that they had seen a difference and were particularly impressed with the level of individual that had come from a SSACI supported programme. One comment was that,

Makhulu is one of a kind as she is very dedicated and committed and that is the difference between her and many others that have tried their luck within our sector, the thing is that our industry is very stressful and also very demanding and if you are not dedicated and committed to your job, you might as well forget it as you won't make it. There are others who came in and I think they thought they could just make quick cash and a success of themselves but they miscalculated some of the requirements that are needed for this kind of work hence they didn't make it.

This interviewee continued to say that,

I can only thank the people who actually invested on Makhulu as I think is the investment that is worthwhile because she is proving to become a force to be reckoned with here at work and I also believe that she will even do well even if she is placed somewhere else because she has got a very strong and a good character. She is currently not working within her field of training but I think she is doing quite well and she can only grow from this point and possibly challenge for a managerial position in due course.

Overall this section demonstrates that interviewees were generally satisfied with the levels of work preparedness of the graduates as well as the skills and attitudes with which they entered the workplace. This next section focuses on areas that interviewees identified as requiring further development.

4.5 AREAS IN WHICH SSACI GRADUATES REQUIRE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Interviewees were asked whether there are any areas that they believe the graduates require further support and development. As indicated previously interviewees generally stated that they were pleased with the graduates though some observed that it may be premature to comment. Some of the statements made include,

There are no gaps that I can think of, as he is still new and we haven't seen him tested that much to allow his true sense to come out if he is not being true to us at this point as you now that sometimes people can actually be in a certain way, out of just pure pretence.

There are no gaps that I have identified as maybe a lot of those, happens whenever he is around his peers and I might not be around to pick up on certain things that he probably needs to work on as a young man, because he needs to grow and experience life whilst at the same time learning from his mistakes and those of others around him.

There are no particular gaps, perhaps it is a bit early as she hasn't shown any gaps that are of any effect to her competencies or deliverables, she is a very lively person who gets along with anyone very easy and I must say that as an admin manager she has been a blessing to my Department.

Other interviewees indicated that there were a few areas in which they believed the graduates could still develop. These areas are highlighted below:

A few of the interviewees stated that the areas that required development related to the specifics within the company. Interviewees stated that,

Although it was not a main gap or something that was of much concern, she had some areas that needed to be worked with in her administrative abilities and

competencies, she came with a very sound background of computers and related systems but we needed to re enforce that with some more of what administrative work translates itself to in a workplace and also orientate her about the systems that we used for records and Patient Files including some files that are of administrative support to the finance department of our unit.

The only thing that was lacking in her skills was the ability to engage with sub contractors in negotiating for service fees and arrangements as we acknowledged that it is something that she had never done before but we were quite optimistic that she will learn that through practice as she already demonstrated some key competencies and technical abilities on the other components of her job.

The obvious ones were those that had to do with the operations at the plant as it was the new one which had a lot of dealings with some companies in Germany, because we produce interior parts for BMW vehicles, so he needed to be trained and orientated first before we could actually deploy him for any duty.

Many of the comments related to issues pertaining to communication and include,

The only thing that I think is an area that we need to work with regarding her life skills is her communication skills, I realized that although she is doing so well as a receptionist but she can improve on it although it is not area that she was probably trained on but as a person generally you need to be able to represent yourself and communicate with the world in the best way that describes you, it is a skill that everyone needs to have especially in the business sector, you need to be able to sell yourself or what you represent as a lot may count on that.

The only thing is this regard is the way she communicates, I think because in her previous work she didn't have to deal with many people as she mostly concentrated on solving equational problems and dealing with checks and balances, so in this one where she interacts with a lot of people inside and outside of the company that is proving to be a challenge and she has also acknowledged that and we are putting mechanisms in place to be able to assist her.

There were some gaps in relation to how she had to communicate or rather negotiate with our clients and potential clients as that is a skill that you obviously need to learn and master in time because they don't necessarily teach you that in school but experience does. The other thing is that since she was also doing some personal assistance job for me over and above her administrative responsibilities, I realized that she didn't have a drivers license and it was imperative for her to have it because there could be other responsibilities that are out of the office that needs her attention, but also noting that we are in the transport sector and there could be other opportunities elsewhere that requires of her to have a valid driver's license.

One interviewee suggested that there was a need for the individual to develop greater levels of personal insight. This interviewee stated that,

There are no gaps that I could identify, the only thing to probably look at, at this point is his confidence and accuracy as he is a very confident someone and when that is not properly guided and nurtured, that could be misunderstood as arrogance, hence I am saying that he needs to be helped or guided in that so that he doesn't run the risk of being misunderstood.

Two other interviewees, almost in contrast, commented that the graduates need increased levels of confidence,

The only thing that I realized which is on a lowlight for me is his tendency of underestimating himself and I am not sure as to how I can translate that into a life

skills gap, but I feel that he holds himself too much as he doubts himself and he can actually achieve greater things if he just believes in himself.

The only things that I could pick up was that he was not very free and confident in expressing himself, so I could say that he lacked confidence to present himself and not that he can't speak, he can speak and express himself very well, but the thing is that he lacked motivation to stand for what he believes is right and also the self drive to do things or make decisions as and when it is required as sometimes we are not always around, but I must say that a lot of that has changed since we have shown that we trust him by even giving him a managerial responsibilities and I also had to speak to him about it.

Interestingly this second interviewee indicated that with work experience some of the gaps that were identified when graduates entered the workplace are being addressed. This is consistent with previous sections in which interviewees emphasised that one of the most important characteristic that new employees can have is the ability to learn.

This section highlights that while employer interviewees expressed high levels of satisfaction with the skills and attitudes of the graduates and suggested that only a few gaps have been identified. These gaps mainly related to practical skills related to a particular workplace, communication skills as well as levels of personal awareness.

4.6 IN SUMMARY: FACTORS THAT EMPLOYER INTERVIEWEES CONSIDER IMPORTANT FOR PROGRAMMES PREPARING INDIVIDUALS FOR THE WORKPLACE

In this section interviewees were asked what they believe are the factors that contribute to the development of individuals that are ready to enter the workplace. A number of views were expressed and these are captured in this section.

4.6.1 Effective life skills

Interviewees emphasised the need for young people to be supported to make positive decisions in their lives and to understand what is involved in such a decision. This was phrased in terms of the concern that many young people are perceived to be taking self-destructive decisions. As expressed by one interviewee,

The other thing is that she (the SSACI Graduate) is also accurate and bright; she has a bright future if she will continue on this path and not be confused about a lot of things that affects young people such as substance abuse, ineffectiveness, inefficiency and laziness.

It was also phrased as a statement about the values and attitudes that interviewees would value. This includes an emphasis on an awareness of self, a sense of purpose, and a strong culture of work and ethics. This was expressed by the majority of interviewees and the following three quotes capture the essence of what was recommended,

I think agencies such as Senpower are needed as intermediaries between young people and the workplace environments as they are very much useful in preparing young people for the journey that they are about to take in their lives, and that helps the youth themselves to become more aware and also take responsibility where needed so that they become valuable employees.

The other thing that is also important is the issue of instilling the culture of work and ethics that are required in the workplace as a lot of young people take it for granted that because they have the qualifications, then they are employable.

I personally think that young people needs some kind of a programme that could somehow instil a sense of responsibility and purpose as I have established that a lot of young people really lack that and in a workplace those two are needed crucially….I am not sure how that can be done but I am thinking that if government and private sector could somehow employ analysts and researchers who will have to study the behaviours of young people and some of the contributing factors, especially from home or demographical background and then craft a programme that could possibly respond to this challenge of enabling young people to sustain their jobs and not lose them purely because of their attitudes and behaviour and not so much about their skills and competencies

In addition to the personal and inter-personal life skills interviewees also highlighted the need for skills such as computer skills as well as driving skills as ones that are required across industries.

4.6.2 Practical Experience

Interviewees stated that there is a real need for individuals to access practical training and workplace experience as part of their programme of learning. It was suggested that this would be very important in providing young people with an understanding as to the nature of the workplace. This view was expressed by a number of interviewees. One interviewee stated that,

I think the students spends most of their time classrooms and lecture rooms and they spend a very limited time doing practical's hence you find that a lot of them have a very strong theoretical understanding of things and not such a strong sense of applications, so I personally think that if they may spend a fair amount of time doing practical's they could even develop a better understanding of what it actually takes to be in a workplace environment.

And another commented that,

I think they should offer more young people internships so that they may learn whilst they are learning so that they may have a better understanding of how the workplace environment is

Interviewees also indicated that this workplace exposure would assist the young person to develop career goals and plans,

I think the government or any relevant stakeholders must get them more practical instances that would prepare their mindset in relation to work and also invest more in assisting them with their career choices and decisions as that is important in helping them to make informed choices about their careers and not to end up working in sectors that they do not prefer or like.

This view was reinforced by another interviewee who stated that,

I think young people should be given practical opportunities of work so that they may build on their experience and also ascertain for themselves if certain sectors or industries are worth their pursuit as it is better if you place a person in something that he can be best in and not really force them or to be forced by their circumstances to only go within certain industries.

Other interviewees stated that to maximise the learning in the workplace it is valuable if the employer consciously plans what the young person will do in the workplace. One interviewee reflected on the manner in which they run the workplace component and commented on the perceived value of this approach,

> *We have a rotating system for new staff so that they may know different departments of the hotel and also understand the operations so that in cases of emergency she might then be capable of being placed anywhere in the hotel but now she has completed that and she is now full time as a Chef.*

Many interviewees also stated that it would be valuable if work exposure began when young people are still at school so that they would enter further learning programmes with a sense of the workplace and what is required.

4.6.3 Foundational Education

While this section focuses on the importance of vocational training and the development of employability skills, interviewees emphasised that it is critical that young people enter these programmes with strong foundational skills. This reinforces the view expressed throughout this report about the need for strong communication skills.

One interviewee stated that,

> *They need to have a good school background, good communication skills and also good writing skills as I have realized that a lot of young people are lacking when it comes to writing skills, a lot of applications that I receive for employment from people who have even graduated from colleges and some from universities are struggling to write well and in some instances to express themselves or articulate their proposal or request, so I really think that this is a serious matter to be looked at, as I don't think there will be any employer who could hire someone who can't either express themselves or write well because there is a lot that depends on that in a workplace.*

And another commented that,

> *I think the education system should emphasize on the three elements which I think are fundamentals in any workplace as part of preparing young people for jobs, these are Maths, English and communication skills, both written and verbal. I think that these elements are applicable in any workplace based on my experience hence they should be noted, it is very embarrassing to engage a university student who can't even express H/Herself or articulate his point of view, so it is important to emphasize on the three elements that I have already mentioned and also equip them with the skills to work under pressure as that it is also crucial in a business environment*

The need for foundational skills has been well documented, and the concern expressed while directed at the education system more broadly poses a real challenge for vocational programmes of the nature supported by SSACI. This will be explored further in this report.

5 CASE STUDIES

As indicated in the methodology section of this report, as part of this evaluation, Singizi also focused on a number of projects in more depth so as to develop a number of case studies. These case studies allowed the evaluation team to extract lessons from various SSACI-funded projects on how to maximize the value of vocational education and training in order to enhance the employability of young people. The case studies were selected because while they are of diverse programmes they all contain the key elements of the model. Therefore the case studies offer the opportunity to explore the model and the effect that the different elements appear to have on the objective of increased employability. As indicated previously this specifically considers the elements of: technical training, mentoring (including life skills) and access to workplace experience.

As indicated the selected case studies include: KZN Poultry Learnerships, TECSAT College Scholarships, Western Cape Community ECD Services, Accelerated Artisan Training, Hospitality Skills for 2010 KZN Rural Health Project and the FET Colleges Project at Umgungundlovu. The experiences of each are documented below together with the key learning emerging from each case.

The following section of this report then draws out the cross cutting issues based on these case studies as well as the learner and employer interviews. This also takes into account the issues emerging from the literature review.

5.1 KZN POULTRY LEARNERSHIPS

This case study focuses on the KZN Poultry Learnerships project. This project has been providing training for the poultry industry since 1992. SSACI, together with other funders, provided financial support to KZNPI to develop and run a learnership between September 2007 and September 2008 towards a level 3 qualification in poultry management. The programme targeted 25 learners of which 23 completed the programme successfully. KZNPI had previously offered the qualification but over a shorter period of time (around 6 months).

5.1.1 Description of Programme

The course follows SAQA's requirements for a National Certificate in Poultry Production, Level 3 (this qualification comprises 138 credits). The programme is delivered on the KZNPI farm, where both classroom teaching and practical application (with on-site mentoring and support) occurs. Learners are expected to live on the farm for the duration of the learnership. The programme includes a placement in a large poultry enterprise for a period of around 6 weeks.

5.1.2 Manner in which the programme was determined

In choosing to support this project, SSACI was keen to extend the reach of the vocational skills training that they supported to rural youth. This was identified as a priority as it was found that opportunities for training; development and employment are very limited for rural youth.

It was also established that the main economic activity in rural areas is agriculture as well as certain service industry related activities. SSACI decided that it did not want

to support rural young people to be trained and then limited to opportunities such as labourers or subsistence farmers: instead the challenge that SSACI wanted to address was how to enable young people to access employment in Commercial Agriculture. This decision was taken as it was felt that these jobs offer young people the opportunity to access an economic opportunity that is both meaningful and sustainable. It was also taken as it was established that there was a demand within the industry for new black entrants who have the potential to move into senior positions. This demand meant that there was some confidence that learners that were successful would be able to access employment in the industry.

As KZNPI already offered a programme that trained young people to enter into Commercial Agriculture, SSACI decided to approach this organisation to form a partnership. KZNPI were open to working with SSACI and to delivering the programme in a manner that was consistent to the model that SSACI was developing for effective vocational skills training. The programme therefore commenced on that basis.

5.1.3 Selection of students

The programme was widely advertised in newspapers throughout KwaZulu-Natal. Individuals applied, and those that met the minimum criterion of a matriculation certificate with mathematics and English were asked to write a motivation essay and to attend an interview. In addition to this, individuals had to undertake a competency test in mathematics and English. According to the representative from Rainbow Chickens, these criterion were decided upon in consultation with them and took into account the needs of employers with regards to potential employees.

The students who were accepted ranged between 17 and 27 years of age, with the average age between 20 and 21. Some of the students had undertaken limited further learning since completing school, but most of the students had not studied since leaving school.

An evaluation of the programme that was completed in November 2008, raised concerns about the selection process: it suggested that while KZNPI had developed selection tools and applied a rigorous selection process, there will still challenges in relation to English and mathematics.

5.1.4 Nature of the programme being supported

According to the Project Manager, students had daily lectures in the classroom and were then required to spend the rest of the time on the KZNPI farm so as to gain practical experience. This was seen as an important way of enabling the learners to practically apply their classroom based learning.

This practical experience component included a regulated assessment activity. This assessment was closely linked to the teaching in the classroom and the student had to be signed off as competent in the workplace in order to complete a module. It was indicated by the project manager that as part of this process, students were required to undertake general daily tasks so that they could also add value to the farm.

Specific materials for the learnership were developed by a poultry specialist with input from various industry experts and in consultation with the lecturers.

Interviewees from the provider indicated that this approach to materials development ensured that the materials were kept up to date and adjusted accordingly.

It was also indicated by the project manager that the lecturers already had considerable experience in their field and that they had been provided with training to enhance their facilitation and assessment skills. The project manager reports that the lecturers are highly creative and innovative in their assessments.

The project manager stated that the fundamentals (English and mathematics) were delivered by the same facilitators and it was suggested that this provided an opportunity for integrated delivery.

As the students had English and mathematics to matric level and were enrolled in a level 3 qualification, it was anticipated that the students would be able to cope with the demands of these subjects. However, considering the findings of the evaluation; the delivery of the fundamentals may not have been sufficient and there may be a need to consider whether the integrated approach to teaching the fundamentals ensures that the learners attain sufficient competence in these subject areas. Alternatively, as the difficulties with the fundamentals do not appear to have negatively impacted on the subsequent performance of the students in the commercial workplace (see below), these requirements may need to be reviewed.

5.1.5 Type of life skills support provided by the programme

The project manager states that there was a substantial focus on the development of "soft skills" done outside of the classroom, both at the KZNPI farm and at the commercial workplace. Through this, the programme created opportunities for learners to access feedback about the various soft skills from the people that they worked with and that supervised them. This included the farm manager and farm assistants who regularly interacted and worked with the learners. The project manager indicated that this feedback was provided in a constructive manner so as to facilitate learning and development.

It was also indicated that external providers were also brought into provide HIV/AIDS and First Aid training.

5.1.6 The nature of the workplace exposure/placement component

It has already been explained that the KZNPI farm offered the learners the opportunity to gain practical experience throughout the learning process.

However, despite the levels of support and supervision that were provided, as discussed above, the final project report submitted to SSACI noted that because an aspect of the work on the KZNPI farm was unstructured, several learners were not spending enough time working on the farm. To address this concern, structured practical sessions were introduced. The project manager indicated that this forced all the learners to spend time in the different poultry houses carrying out specific tasks. These structured tasks were also integrated into the competency assessments.

In addition to the KZNPI farm, Rainbow Chickens as part sponsor of the programme also agreed to take on students for workplace experience. As Rainbow was not able to take on all students, some went to National Chickens. As these farms cover all aspects of agriculture that relates to poultry production and have farms that have

large scales of production, students were able to experience the entire operation and get a first hand exposure to leading edge operations.

The project manager explained that, as indicated, both workplaces were able to provide a high quality of workplace experience, but that National Chickens took the students for two weeks less. Through this arrangement all students were accommodated at a commercial workplace: the bulk of students were placed at Rainbow Chickens, with only four going to National Chickens. This allocation to workplaces was done one on the basis of random selection.

When at the workplace, learners were allocated mentors. These mentors supported the development of soft skills, as discussed, and also assisted the learners with a range of tasks. As part of this role, the mentor completed various worksheets which formed part of the portfolio of evidence.

In addition to this there were other forms of competency assessments conducted that were carried out by KZNPI. KZNPI also met with the employer to discuss the performance of each student.

However, the evaluation report found that while SSACI required staff visit or telephone the learners whilst they were on practical experience, this was apparently not done. According to the evaluation conducted at the end of 2008 students all expressed the view that they would have appreciated this contact with KZNPI mentors.

In reviewing the workplace component, the project manager highlighted a number of issues. The interviewee stated that due to the timing of the workplace experience – that is, early on in the programme - it provided a more general orientation rather than a real opportunity for the learner to apply their skills. The project manager suggested that it may therefore be preferable for this component to be held later in the programme. However, she also stated that they could not be categorical as the good exposure that learners had early on in the programme meant that the learners could understand what to expect and in this regard, the placement appeared to have had a positive effect on the performance of the students. It was indicated that one option could be two blocks of off-site training but the project manager indicated that the programme could not allow for this time wise. This balance will need to be considered in future training.

The other area that emerged as a positive learning pertaining to the workplace experience was that the strong working relationship and high level of trust between the company and KZNPI meant that there was a high level of alignment between what was being taught at KZNPI and industry expectations. This view was emphasized by both the project manager and employers and points to a practice that should be considered across programmes.

5.1.7 What support was in place to identify and access employment opportunities?

The project data indicates that the majority of learners have been placed in employment and at the time of the interview only 2 learners had not accessed employment. Some of these learners have gone into supervisory level positions, while others have been employed to operate as general labourers within a commercial farm.

There appear to be a number of ways in which the project assisted learners to access employment.

Firstly, the project manager stated that learners were supported to apply for employment and present well during a recruitment process. To do this, external service providers were brought in to develop the students' CVs, interview techniques and their understanding of retailing in the poultry industry. Feedback from employers suggests that this preparation was a critical factor in the success of the preparation for the workplace.

> *"The response that we got from the interviews exceeded our expectations as we were presented with very mature and highly skilled individuals, who were able to assert themselves and what they need. They were quite clear in their presentations and their CV's were also neatly developed and they could also communicate their abilities and challenges very well without any fear or anxiety. They had the confidence to speak and present themselves which I found to be very promising considering that there are even students from the Universities who can't express themselves or have the confidence in an interview to speak their mind." (Ross Poultry Breeders representative)*

Secondly, it was found that many of the students obtained jobs as a result of the placement. As an example, it was found that Rainbow Chickens had nine vacancies and chose to fill these posts with some of the learners that had been with them during the placement period. The Project Manager states that Rainbow would be prepared to take more but that other learners went to National Chickens or other poultry businesses.

This latter point relates to the third way in which learners appear to have been supported to access employment. It was explained that KZNPI's broad networks with other employers in the poultry industry created access for students to employment opportunities.

> *"We applied whilst we were at the college and Ross Poultry Breeders came to interview us at the college and they then informed us who were successful that we will be joining their company when we finish with our studies."*

This was further supported by a representative from Ross Poultry Breeders.

> *"We actually contacted Judy form KZNPI, and she was quite helpful in assisting to get the students as we were quite desperate at the time because we were experiencing serious skills gaps."*

This section highlights the myriad of ways in which learners were supported to access employment. They emphasise the value of supporting learners with the selection process, the role of the placement both in terms of preparing the learners and in terms of establishing contacts and building trust with an employer, as well as the importance of the provider network in enabling learners to access employment.

5.1.8 Were learners prepared to enter the world of work?

The students stated that as a result of the intensive exposure to a working poultry farm, they developed a holistic understanding of the production process. This enabled the learners to understand what would be required and to prepare for the employment process. It was suggested that this assisted the students to move easily into and adapt to the workplace environment.

Further, students suggested that the scope of their technical training prepared them to fulfil their responsibilities in the workplace. They specifically mentioned the high level of discipline that they developed in relation to record keeping and reporting and the technical skills that they had managed to develop so that they could address crises as they arise. The scale of these responsibilities, and the skills that were required to fulfil these, is reflected in the comment below:

> *"My responsibilities are to ensure that all systems are running well for production and that means making sure that regular inspections are made and deal with any maintenance issue that may arise and over and above managing people, I also make sure that they understand what they need to do and they are doing that and then I would end my day with writing a production report to our head office where it will be captured." (KZNPI student)*

This perspective resonated with the view expressed by an employer interviewee who stated that they were impressed with the extent to which learners who applied for jobs were both technically prepared and able to easily integrate into the workplace.

> *"They demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the industry and the understanding of what abilities are required and because they had an initial engagement with us, they also knew a lot about our operations in the farms which was an added advantage as we actually required people who wouldn't take long to get into the details of the operations." (Rainbow Chickens representative)*

Over and above the technical skills, interviewees stated that the life skills that they developed through the programme had greatly assisted them in their work,

> *"All these skills are helping to become effective and useful in my line of work as I can communicate better with people and I also understand and can interpret instructions very well and I can also read and write which makes it easier for me to write the reports that I need to give to my manager." (KZNPI student)*

Interviewees suggested that these core skills had been found to be very important in enabling them to move into supervisory positions.

> *"As a supervisor now I am responsible for everything that happens on site and I am also second in charge in that requires me to have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to ensure quality production and that involves reading and translating instructions to everyone and communicating well, but also providing solutions where challenges – conflict arises and also write up reports amongst other things, using a computer." (KZNPI student)*

An employer interviewee commented that,

> *"The learners demonstrated a fair understanding of a professional environment and how one should conduct him- or- herself accordingly, noting things like communication, taking and submitting instructions and also general conduct in relation to leadership." (Rainbow Chickens representative)*

However, this was not consistently felt to the be the case and one employer interviewee suggested that not all the learners had the required core skills,

> *"I think KZNPI should do more in terms of the cross cutting skills that relates to people skills and the ability to function in a professional environment, because these guys that come through to us are very young and some of them have not been in a professional environment before, hence it becomes important to build their capacity and strengthen them enough to function in such an environment. Their technical skills are very good in*

fact far above the normal or required standard at an entry level, the only thing is to build on their people skills and also thing like communication and professional conduct." (Employer, Ross Poultry Breeders)

This finding may be consistent with the finding that many of the learners struggled with communication and suggests that those learners that had a foundation of communication skills and could build on these so that they could communicate in the workplace benefitted but that those students that lacked the foundation could not develop workplace relevant communication skills.

The final finding with regards to the extent to which students were prepared to enter the workplace is the high level of motivation of the students. Most of the students interviewed stated that they wish to own their own poultry enterprises and understood their current jobs as a means to gather enough experience to start up an enterprise. As commented on by one of learners,

"I now have a job and of late I have been elevated into a supervisor position and I hope to grow even further in the company so as to gather enough experience that I can use in my own business. I want to start my own business but I am still gathering enough experience and expertise in the business so as to make a success of my own business." (KZNPI student)

Other students suggested that they wish to extend their career and move into a support role. This learner commented that,

"I want to establish myself as a Poultry Extension Officer, where I will give support to the emerging poultry projects in communities as there is a general assumption that people know about poultry management and the truth is that there is a lot that our people don't know about poultry farming and the management thereof, so I am hoping to breach that gap and provide that technical support where it is required either through the relevant government departments or the private sector companies that would be interested in helping me to help the communities." (KZNPI student)

This section suggests that the majority of the students appeared to be driven by a strong commitment to a career in the poultry industry. In addition, many of the learners indicated a desire to study further so as to advance their career prospects.

5.1.9 General lessons for the SSACI model

The KZN Poultry Learnership was implemented in a manner that appears to be consistent with the broad SSACI model. The programme was structured as a practically-oriented programme that has the potential to lead to immediate access to employment in an area where there was found to be a demand. The programme elements involve: a technical skills training course, leading to a recognised qualification, an additional life skills training in the form of First Aid and HIV/AIDS as well as assistance with CVs and interviewing skills which were instrumental in getting employment. The programme also included a post-training support component in which the provider assisted the learners to find or create employment. This was supported by supporting the learners with CVs and skills to undertake an interview and through enabling the learners to access the strong networks which the provider has with industry.

This section considers the key challenges and successes related to the KZN Poultry Learnership project. These are instructive in terms of the SSACI model and what can be learnt from this case.

The first issue that arises is the challenge facing KZNPI that the regional market it supports may become saturated. However some of the interviewees suggest that that the learnership responds to a specific niche area within the agricultural sector for which there could be a consistent and sustainable demand. These views highlight the need for KZNPI to monitor this situation and to consider ways in which it will expand its reach in order to effectively support young people to find employment.

The second learning from the KZN Poultry Learnerships project relates to the value of a lengthy programme such as the learnership which integrated classroom based learning with opportunities for practical training and workplace experience. The project is seen by interviewees as one that is innovative particularly for the Commercial Agriculture industry. Interviewees suggest that the integrated and highly practical nature of the learnership, and the requirement that learners reside on the farm for the duration of the learnership, ensures a comprehensive and holistic exposure to the industry and strong understanding of the production process. It has been found that this approach also forces students into the discipline of proper recording-keeping, site management and reporting. It was found that this approach has meant that when learners entered the workplace they were well prepared and were able to integrate easily into the workplace environment. Interestingly, the project manager commented that they initially had misgivings about learnerships, but as the programme progressed she discovered that students became increasingly committed and they now recognise the value of this approach.

The third learning from this project relates to the importance of the provider (KZNPI) having the necessary networks to facilitate employment opportunities for students. The case study suggests that KZNPI has been effectively using their networks to facilitate placement and access to employment. However, there may be a need for this to be expanded as per the earlier discussion and this may require a higher level of capacity within KZNPI.

The fourth learning related to this case study pertains to the question of sustainability. The learner raised a concern that the learners cannot afford to pay the fees and that this will make it difficult to sustain the programme, "*the ship KZNPI will probably never sail on its own if we are to continue to educate people who cannot afford to pay for it.*" In addition, the provider raised a concern that the AgriSETA funding is not felt to be reliable and is also not adequate to cover the costs of the programme. It was suggested that this requires a more proactive collaboration with the National Department of Agriculture and with the industry itself to support the programme over time so that there is a longer term mechanism to enable more young people to enter the industry. It is hoped that the results contained in the evaluation report, as well as the findings from this process, suggest that the industry is starting to realize the value of the learnership particularly in terms of achieving employment equity at management level, and this creates an opportunity to increase their level of support to the programme.

The final learning emanating from this case study is the importance of a strong team which includes: the facilitators (KZNPI), the employer (farm manager) and supervisors (farm assistant). It was found that this collective formed a strong team and met informally on an ongoing basis to discuss the progress of the learners and consider ways to support the learners and to ensure their on-going development.

5.2 TECSAT COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

TECSAT (Technical College Student Aid Trust) operates in the Western Cape and provides bursaries, mentorship and assistance to disadvantaged students who wish to attend a FET College. SSACI has supported TECSAT since 2003, supporting 40 students in the first phase, 80 students in the second phase (Jan 2005 – May 2007) and since January 2008 is currently supporting a further 40 students.

The first two phase's targeted commercial (business and financial management) and engineering. This current phase targets engineering (30 students) and professional cookery (10 students).

5.2.1 Description of Programme

TECSAT College Scholarships seeks to combine financial aid to young students with mentoring and support. The SSACI project was an extension of the work TECSAT has been doing for the past decade. The bursary covers full registration and tuition costs as well as text books. Where applicable, hostel and transport costs are also covered. The money is paid directly to the college or other service provider. No cash is paid to the students themselves.

The decision to work with an external NGO arose because SSACI was looking for a partner that could provide students with both the financial and mentoring support. It was felt that because colleges were going through such rapid changes it would not be realistic to assume that they could provide these services.

5.2.2 Manner in which the programme was determined

SSACI's decision to fund TECSAT College Sector Scholarships was based on its commitment to working in the college to address the demand for vocational skills in industry. It was anticipated that these students, who are still studying the N-qualifications, as part of the transition group, would be absorbed by industry which is seeking engineering students with N-qualifications, a combination of practical important for levels 2 and 3 and good academic results. Further, it was anticipated that the learners that completed cookery courses would be absorbed into the growing hospitality industry. This assessment was made based on an understanding of the demand for these qualifications in the two sectors as reflected in sector skills plans and other research reports about the potential growth in these sectors.

5.2.3 Selection of learners

The process that is followed by TECSAT to select the students that will receive support is as follows:

- Prospective students are invited to apply through advertisements in newspapers and posters on the campuses at the colleges. Some students also report that they heard about the programme through friends that had participated in the programme in the past as well as from referrals from lecturers.
- All applicants are screened against the following criteria: Age (between 17-24 years), Status (they cannot have been out of school for more than two years), Income of family per month and the number of dependents in the household (linked to inability to pay the college fees) and academic potential (based on previous high school and college results).

- Those individuals who meet the criteria are interviewed individually by the bursary administrator where she gauges the applicant's attitude and motivation. This interview took place on a face-to-face basis.

5.2.4 Nature of the programme being supported

The programmes in which students enrolled are industry aligned with a strong practical focus and aimed at the achievement of an industry-relevant qualification. The programmes in which the SSACI supported learners are based appear to be taught by lecturers who have industry experience and are therefore able to bring this experience into the classroom and provide real life scenarios so that the learners are able to apply the knowledge being developed. One of the lecturers commented that,

> *"I would refer to examples of a clients, what they want and how they would want it to be done ….would require the learner to then translate it into electrical terms which might mean drawing out or designing the structure and mapping out where all the connections are, including where the clients would want the plugs and power points…. so my task with them would be to ensure that they are then able to translate that and also deliver on what the clients want because at the end of the day what the work boils down to is the ability to deliver on what the client requires, whichever or whoever that maybe." (Engineering Lecturer, College of Cape Town)*

This lecturer reported that there are limitations on equipment and resources though it was indicated by the organisation that this constraint is not across all programmes, for example the cookery programme has all the required resources. Further, even in the case of engineering the lecturer indicated that the colleges use the available equipment as far as possible to develop the student's general capacity for problem solving so as to prepare the individual for the workplace environment.

A further feature of the programme is that TECSAT is required to monitor the recipients' performance throughout their studies. TECSAT also reviews whether the learner is still eligible for a bursary as the learner completes a course. This review is linked to the basic requirement that each learner has to achieve over 50% for the course in order to continue to receive the bursary.

However the project manager reported that TECSAT applied some flexibility in the minimum requirement of a 50% pass in all subject for eligibility to continue with the programme. In some cases TECSAT allowed students to proceed to the following year even if they had not achieved 50% on all subjects, as long as they rewrote the failed exam later. This allowed the students who were struggling with particular subjects, the opportunity to complete their qualification over a longer period of time.

5.2.5 Type of life skill support provided by the programme

The TECSAT project manager states that the life skills' training is a weakness in the programme. While TECSAT has had a budget allocation for life skills training, their capacity to offer this is reported to have been limited in part because the students are spread across different campuses. The TECSAT project manager commented that this is an area that they are trying to strengthen through link up with a specialized provider in order to be more responsive to the needs of learners in areas such as personal finance, conflict resolution and other areas of concern.

While training in life skills may not be provided as anticipated it is noted that one of the factors that is perceived to make this programme unique is the focus on mentoring and support which also contribute to the development of life skills.

The project manager explained that the TECSAT mentoring model is designed to involve two levels. The first level of mentoring is intended to take place at the college and it is intended that this be provided by the student support officer within the college. The second level is intended to be provided by the TECSAT mentor whose anticipated role is being that of complementing the support that is provided at the college as well as assisting the learners with job placement.

However with regards to level one; findings from the 2004 evaluation and the interview with the project manager indicates that the college student support services are generally limited and it appears that the student support officer is generally not taking place as anticipated.

By contrast the TECSAT mentoring role is quite extensive and is reported, in the most recent evaluation which was in April 2007, to include: regular visits to the college to meet with recipients, telephonic support, meetings with student support officers and students, life skill training to recipients to enable them to prepare for work, advising recipients on labour market access, liaising with college student support officers and providing detailed monthly reports on each student.

This role seems to be greatly appreciated by the recipients, and the latest evaluation report indicated that the recipients were very positive about the level of external mentoring support received. The recipients' also reported that TECSAT is always at hand to engage with their problems and queries, and indicate that they receive regular updates in information. Theprevious evaluation report (December 2004) suggested that one of the factors that contribute to this relationship is that the recipients are introduced to the mentor in the beginning of the programme and that this relationship is strengthened over time. Other factors that were cited by the project manager as being important to this relationship is that the on-programme support extends from additional academic support to emotional support where the student is experiencing personal problems and to social support where students are caught in difficult home circumstances. The scope of support therefore extends beyond a focus on what happens in the college and this is felt to be very positive. Finally recipients cite the importance of having had constant access to the TECSAT mentor via telephone (her cell-phone) which they indicated provides an immediate point of reference when problems arose.

While the mentoring work appears to be very positive the 2007 evaluation report observed that there is a concern about the capacity that TECSAT has had available for the mentoring role: the bursary administrator at TECSAT also plays the role of mentor. This is indicative of limited capacity within the organization and had the effect of limiting the number of visits to the college that were possible. In addition, the evaluation report indicates that the TECSAT mentor has been unable to engage effectively with student support officers in the college which creates a continued reliance on the external support and does not contribute to the strengthening of the role that the student support officer is able to play. The extent that there could be external reliance can be seen by the fact that students see the TECSAT mentor as the first level source of support rather than approaching the student support officer.

In summary though it appears from the above that even with limited capacity TECSAT has managed to provide the required support to recipients. This is likely to further improve as TECSAT recently appointed a student support officer to enhance the support provided to bursary recipients. This could address the concern that was raised relating to the regularity of visits and the ability of TECSAT to work with the student support officers in the colleges.

5.2.6 The nature of the workplace exposure /placement component

The engineering related programmes in which the TECSAT College Scholarships students enrol do not include a workplace exposure or placement component. This is not true of the Professional Cookery courses which includes extensive in-service training.

The TECSAT student support officer noted that learners are only doing the theoretical and practical component of their training within the college and are not placed with any employers.

> *"We only train the learners in a workshop and we impart the skills that are equivalent to what the industry would require from someone at level 3."* *(Engineering Lecturer, College of Cape Town)*

Recipients commented that they believe it would be valuable if TECSAT could engage with companies to secure structured work placements so that by the time they complete the programme they will have gained real work experience. Students felt that this would improve their chances of securing employment.

According to project manager, there is a high uptake of engineering students in particular into apprenticeships and learnerships. The organisation suggests that this is attributed to increased industry demand and apprenticeship opportunities. The project manager also said that it may be possible that the high level of support offered to these students could have provided these students an advantage in the selection processes.

The project manager indicated that through the learnerships and apprenticeships these students would have then gained access to structured workplace experience. Similarly the commercial students (from previous years) appeared to have moved into forms of employment where they offered some form of induction training in the companies when the recipients joined the organisation.

5.2.7 What support was in place to identify employment opportunities?

Employment search is largely left to the initiative of the students. TECSAT ensures that students are informed about appropriate job positions that are advertised through newspapers and other forms of media. However, it does not directly engage with employers to facilitate placement nor is there a focus on developing the job preparation skills of the recipients. In addition, the project manager indicated that most of the employment opportunities are provided through companies coming to the college.

In the 2007 evaluation report, the limited direct advice offered to students about ways to access the job market offered by the programme was cited as a point of concern – it was noted that there is a once-off workshop for 3 hours on job-hunting. The evaluation report questioned the effectiveness of this workshop and commented that: first time entrants to the labour market require more intensive support in order to build their confidence and communication skills and that in the absence of placement support in the colleges this is the only direct intervention aimed at enabling job placement.

However, despite this limitation most learners interviewed reported that they are already applying for job opportunities and apprentice opportunities as advertised and

publicized in different media or that were heard of through word of mouth. Two learners wanted to further their studies and were working on acquiring the financial support as they wouldn't be in a position to cover for the fees by themselves. Students indicated that the mentoring support already received had enabled them to take this initiative and they expressed a sense of self-motivation and confidence about their employment prospects.

In addition, the project manager indicated that as there is demand in these areas, she indicated that the demand for engineering students with at least a N3 has increased dramatically and it has been easy for recipients to access opportunities. She explained that they have had to request that SSACI top up 12 students as this many had left the programme because they got jobs.

There were however a few learners who stated that it would be helpful if they were to receive increased access to career information and also with applying to different companies.

5.2.8 Were learners prepared to enter the world of work?

There was very little comment in this area as many of the learners within the engineering programmes had entered further learning programmes and had not yet tried to enter the world of work. All learners interviewed were confident that they would have acquired enough technical knowledge to take up an opportunity of employment in the areas of their study by the time they finished their studies. Some students commented that they would like to study further so as to specialize in their trade.

Critically, the employers that were interviewed commented on the fact that the recruits from the colleges who had been TECSAT bursary recipients (business studies graduates) were lacking somewhat in communication skills but that they had no concerns about their technical capability.

5.2.9 General lessons for SSACI model

The TECSAT College Scholarships project meets many of the requirements of the SSACI model. It responds to a demand for particular qualifications which, together with the practical components, enable young people to have immediate entry into employment.

The key strength of this programme is the additional mentoring support which provides young people with an opportunity for personal development. The evaluation team suggests that a possible weakness in the programme is the absence of a structured post-training placement service: as the colleges do not play this role it means it does not take place. However this limitation appears to be tempered by the extensive mentoring support that students receive and it is therefore suggested only that the possibilities of extending this element be considered.

The TECSAT College Scholarships project is driven by the persistent demand from industry for intermediate technical skills. In being a bursary programme, the key success of the programme is providing over a hundred young people the opportunity to study at college. This is seen as a real strength of the programme. According to the TECSAT project manager the decision to deliberately target programmes that are industry aligned contributes greatly to the chances of the learners to access employment. It was suggested that the decision by SSACI to place more emphasis

on engineering and to shift to professional cookery from commercial qualifications is an indication of how responsive the programme is to demand.

In addition she suggested that SSACIs chose to continue with the N-qualifications, despite the introduction of the NC(V) qualifications, because it was felt that the N-qualifications would be more easily accepted by industry and this is a further indication of this responsiveness. The decision to continue to focus on N-qualifications was also driven by the fact that students who enter into the NC(V) qualifications are able to access state bursaries. It is suggested that this decision may have to be reviewed once the NC(V) programmes is more firmly established and the financial support may have to shift to supporting programmes that are in demand by industry but not part of the NC(V) offerings (because they are already receiving a bursary).

The mentoring provided appears to add significant value to the programme and places the students at an advantage when seeking employment. The college lecturer reports that TECSAT College Scholarships students are more motivated and willing to seize any opportunity to learn. College lecturers and students also suggest that the mentoring support appears to have a positive effect on the students' performance.

However, the one area that requires further work relates to the imperative to institutionalise the mentoring and it is hoped that with the additional capacity that is now in place in TECSAT there will be the possibility of working with the colleges more effectively to play this role.

5.3 WESTERN CAPE COMMUNITY ECD SERVICES

The CECD is a NGO focusing on advocacy, support to ECD centres and training for ECD Practitioners. SSACI provided CECD with funding for a two-year programme aimed at six community-managed ECD centres and 40 outreach sites in the greater Cape Town area.

The project goals are
   I.   To train fifty (50) practitioners in ECD Level 5, resulting in each practitioner graduating with a nationally recognised qualification.
   II. To train three-hundred (300) community members (specifically parents) enabling them to provide leadership and management skills to their community ECD centres.
   III. To train three-hundred (300) teachers and parents, at community-based ECD centres, on prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and Basic First Aid, especially with a focus on the safety of young children.
   IV. To provide basic educational equipment to the forty (40) ECD outreach sites.
   V.   To assist forty (40) outreach sites in becoming self-sustainable.

This report focuses specifically on the first project goal; that is the training of 50 practitioners. The programme has involved two groups. In the first year (2007) a group of 28 students were trained of which 15 had successfully completed by the end of 2008, while a further 13 have received credits towards the qualification and have been given until March 2009 to complete. For the second group of 30 which started in March 2008, 9 dropped out for a range of reasons (including pregnancy and ill health). The remaining 21 students are due to complete their training by July 2009.

5.3.1 Description of Programme

CECD traditionally offers Level 4 National Certificates for ECD practitioners. This qualification has a set curriculum and is generally delivered over a year. The training includes classroom based learning (which is delivered by the College of Cape Town) combined with weekly one-day practical experience in a local ECD centres. The students also undertake 4-5 two-week blocks of practical experience in "best practice" ECD centres.

The weekly practical involves a tutor-teacher who is responsible for the assessment of the student, which takes place throughout the qualification period. The CECD facilitator then visits the ECD centre after the completion of each unit standard to observe and verify the assessment.

5.3.2 Manner in which the programme was determined

The Western Cape Community ECD Services project was determined because of the policy focus on the upgrading of ECD practitioners to address the need for an expanded ECD service to extend to all Grade Rs as well as far greater levels of provision to pre-Grade R. This emphasis was reflected in Department of Social Development documents which provided Guidelines for Child Care. It was then given practical expression in the Expanded Public Works Programme in which the social sector committed itself to vastly increasing the number of practitioner that received training and then could enter employment in the sector.

SSACI decided that the most effective way of meeting the need for this increased number of trained ECD practitioners would be to bring in young people who have an interest in the profession but that have not yet been to university.

However, the implementation of the EPWP ECD programmes has not rolled out as anticipated and there is still limited clarity as to who will fund pre-Grade R posts in ECD centres and how this will take place. This means that the demand is not as anticipated and the implication of this will be explored in this case study.

5.3.3 Selection of Learners

CECD usually offers their programme to individuals that may have dropped out of school but that have some experience working in the ECD sector. In the case of the SSACI-funded project, CECD is delivering the Level 5 Higher Certificate for ECD Practitioners to young people who: have a Grade 12, can communicate (write in one of three languages), and can demonstrate a commitment to the programme. However, this programme does not require that the students have previous experience in the ECD sector.

The selection process is as follows:
- Applicants are attracted through adverts;
- They are then screened in terms of the above-mentioned criteria;
- Applicants are also required to complete a motivation essay which outlines their vision for their future career.
- The students report that some of them were put through an interview process while others were recruited on the basis of the information they shared about themselves through the questionnaire form that they filled in after they were called in.

A few issues have arisen with regards to these selection criteria: the first issues raised by the project manager is that it is not clear that students understood the nature of the sector and whether they will be prepared to stay in the sector. The other issue that was raised is that they feel it may have been valuable to have had some older students to create improved balance in the classroom. This is explained in more detail as follows:

The training manager stated that when the students first enrolled in the programme they demonstrated *"eagerness and willingness but there was a clear lack of commitment"*. She further states that the learners thought they were coming in to do a "course" and only when they were in the programme did they realize the demands that would be placed on them with regards to the practical work. The project manager stated that this means that while there had been a motivation essay only when students confronted the reality of the sector did they begin to ask the question, "*is this for me?"* He indicates that because of this, there has been a high level of drop-out in the programme.

Students, who were part of the focus groups conducted, confirmed this view and stated that they were doing the course for income generating purposes or ideally to access employment but that they had little sense of ECD before they started the programme.

The CECD training manager commented that if programmes like this are to be run there is a need to introduce more rigorous pre-testing so that CECD could get a better feel of the applicants' knowledge and expectations.

> *"I also have a theory and somehow believe that the targeted group for this programme might not be the right one as my experience challenges that people between the ages of 18 and 21 haven't really decided on what they want to do with their lives and challenging them to assume such responsibilities through the programme is very tricky….because a lot of people have this idea that early childhood development is just about playing in the sand pit with children and pushing the swing occasionally and they only get to realise that it is actually hard work as there is a lot of hard work especially content that one needs to engage with even before one could work with the children"* (CECD Lecturer)

This comment also reflects the point made previously which is that CECD usually trains practitioners who are older than 25. The perception of CECD is that young people are

> *"generally more immature, struggle to grasp concepts and struggle to meet deadlines. This means that educators have to constantly repeat what is being taught and drag out dates for assignments"*.

As a result of this, CECD has extended the programme to 18 months because they feel that one year is too short to effectively cover the content and ensure the students are successful. The project manager feels this could even be extended to two years to achieve optimal results.

The other recommendation made by the training manager is that matriculants cannot be pushed into level 5 if have no experience of ECD "*these young people need to first complete a level 4 qualification before they can attempt level 5."* These issues will be considered in the remainder of this case study.

5.3.4 Nature of the programme being supported

As indicated, the programme is structured in a manner which ensures that there is a constant interaction between the classroom and workplace. It was indicated by a lecturer that, *"The students are basically applying what they learned that week."* It was further explained that the students are then expected to the present the activity that they undertook in the ECD centre in the class and there is then interactive discussion and feedback.

Students are given the opportunity to select the ECD centre in which they would like to be placed. The student approaches the centre to inquire if they would be interested. CECD then makes contact with the centre and conducts – as far as possible - an initial evaluation of the centre and communicates with the centre to get buy-in to the programme and understanding around CECD's expectations should they agree to host the student. Part of this initial evaluation is a baseline assessment aimed at establishing whether or not the centre is conducive to the placement. The centre is provided with a letter outlining the responsibilities of the tutor-teacher and the reporting requirements.

> *"We have an arrangement with learners that they will first choose their schools of choice for work placement and we try and align that with what we want them to achieve in those schools and also have some assessment with those schools to see whether the school environment would be conducive to such learning." (CECD lecturer)*

It was explained that one the reasons for allowing the student to find the ECD centre is to ensure that the ECD centre is close to where the student lives. Lecturers explained that the proximity of the ECD Centre to the student's home is important for ease of transportation and also assists to ensure that the student is working within his or her community.

Over and above the weekly practical, students also attend blocks at what is termed a "best practice" centre. These are generally in better-resourced areas and are better equipped than the ECD centres in which the students undertake their weekly practical sessions.

There are assessment activities in both the weekly practical as well as at the "best practice" centres. The feedback from these assessments all go into the student's portfolio.

5.3.5 Type of life skill support provided by the programme

As discussed in the selection process, CECD interviewees raised a number of concerns about the maturity of the students and the extent that they are ready to work in the sector. It was stated that this shift to younger learners also changed the scope of support from practical issues such as transport to dealing with personalities and dynamics of the group.

The CECD interviewees stated that this places a great responsibility on the programme to develop the life skills of the students. The training manager captures this challenge as follows,

> *"The one challenge for me hasn't really been around the content or the subject matter that I am required to deliver on, but it has been mostly on finding the right means to further motivate some of the learners to stay committed in the programme although I guess it speaks again to the issues that I raised earlier regarding students age and the willingness to commit in this regard." (CECD lecturer)*

The training manager indicated that the one way in which they responded to this was to develop support strategies to accommodate these different needs. The kinds of strategies that were put in place included:

- Providing students with an orientation before they entered the workplace so that they had a better sense of what to expect;
- Ensuring that the facilitator provides intensive support to the students, particularly while the students are in the workplace.
- Providing life skills training as an integral component of the technical training. The life skills addressed as part of this include: career exploration, dealing with workplace challenges, coping with pressure, dealing with conflicts, improved communication and the concept of professionalism.

Students stated that they found the life skills very valuable and suggested that because it was linked to what would be expected in the workplace this "*made it relevant and useful*". Students stated that they had found it useful both in the workplace but also in assisting them in their daily lives.

Students also indicated that the approach adopted also allowed the lecturer to raise and address issues as they occurred either in the learning or workplace component. Students stated that for example when conflict arose in the workplace then the facilitator provided them with conflict management support which allowed the students to deal with the conflicts and tensions that had arisen.

The project manager indicated that it was found that because students had a better sense of what would be expected in the workplace components of the programme there was a reduced drop out rate. It was stated that this suggests that it is possible to address the concerns about the students but that this requires conscious interventions being put in place. However, it is noted that during the focus group discussion very few of the students were clear about their future career paths although many expressed the desire to study further and complete a diploma. This suggests that there may be a need to strengthen the personal development component of the programme.

5.3.6 The nature of the workplace exposure /placement component

This case study has highlighted the levels of workplace experience that is built into the programme. Interviewees emphasise the importance of students gaining get first-hand experience so that they can develop applied skills. The CECD training manager indicated that

> "*By having exposure to both the local ECD centre and the better-resourced ECD centres, the students are being provided with a balanced view from which to build their knowledge base*".

This perspective was echoed by the students who were very positive about the inter-relationship between classroom and application in the workplace.

Students also commented that they feel that CECD provides them with sufficient preparation and support in the build up to their placements, through both the exposure to the best practice centres and through the lecturer working intensively with them around what is to be expected of them during the placements and what activities would be undertaken

However, students indicate that some times they go to the ECD centres and find that the practitioners in the centre are not very welcoming and do not really understand what the anticipated role of the students will be. The students suggest that practitioners feel threatened as they think that students may undermine their responsibilities or role in the classroom with the children. This perspective resonates with the views expressed by practitioners at the centre. One interviewee from an ECD centre commented that,

> *"The brief that we had with the lady from the centre , was to provide a practical platform for learners to practice what they have been taught by the trainers at the centre, they didn't provide any clear guidelines in terms of what they wanted to do with their learners provided that. They also told us that they would be coming for assessments and some observations and may need our input in some things relating to the learners, which we have continued to do without any problem." (Host employer)*

The students also stated that while they found their experience at the "best practice" ECD Centres to be very valuable they found that it was sometimes challenging to take this learning from the best practice centre back to the ECD centre. They explained that,

> *"This proved to be challenging at time because the teachers at these centres felt threatened by the different teaching methods they were bringing from these "best practice" centres".*

The students observed though, that after the workplace they go back to CECD and reflect on their experiences and share areas of struggle and challenges, and the trainer and other students assist them to address these challenges based on their own experiences. The students stated that this process provided them with a good understanding of what is required in the sector and "*empowers us to deal with problems as they arise*".

However, students stated that the above-mentioned challenges could be further ameliorated if there was improved communication between CECD and the ECD centres when the workplace activities are arranged. The students expressed that CECD should communicate with the centre so as to explain and define their roles and thereby ease the unnecessary tensions that emerge between them and the teachers.

With regards to the assessment activities that take place in the workplace components the training manager states that this has been very valuable in enabling them to make the linkages between classroom based learning and the practical work that is required of them.

Students also stated that the assessments are carried out in a supportive manner. Interestingly they also indicate that the assessments have also assisted the practitioners at the ECD centres to understand that the students are there to learn and not to take their jobs. Students stated that this has been useful in remedying the working relations. It was stated that this is further supported because the ECD practitioners are asked for feedback about the students and it was felt that this encourages openness between the practitioners and the students and a sense that they can learn from each other.

However, while the practitioners do appear to contribute feedback to the assessment process; however it does not appear that the centres do any assessment

themselves, despite the report from the training manager that this is the case. One practitioner commented that,

> *"We don't do any assessments ourselves, our teachers are only make themselves available for comment and input whenever Wilma asks them to, in relation to the performance of the learners." (Host employer)*

> *"We only complement what their trainer does in term of their assessments and I guess the success has been a wonderful working relationship that has been fostered by both our educators and learners so as to allow the trainer to make a fair judgement about learner's ability to engage with what is required of them." (Host employer)*

This suggests that there is a need to clarify the expectations with regards to assessment together with the other forms of communication already highlighted. Thus this section suggests that while the workplace components of this programme are considered very valuable this could be further improved if there was improved engagement between CECD and the centres prior to the placements taking place.

5.3.7 What support was in place to identify employment opportunities?

According to the CECD lecturer, the general feedback they receive from the centres is that the students are adequately prepared to engage with learning activities in the workplace. She reports that most centres are generally impressed with the calibre of the student and their preparedness for the workplace.

> *"I would generally have my observation sessions where I sit in their classes so as to assess their competencies against the required standards and also speak to the teachers and management of schools to also get a sense of how the learners are doing… there has been some few concerns of mine here and there but in such cases I have communicated with the concerned learners and asked the students to change the schools or consider other working relations so as to create an environment that would be helpful in their case… we have not much control in changing things from the schools side hence we resort to placing the learner somewhere else [if necessary]."*

One host employer reported that if vacancies were to come about while they the students are still around at our school and they show interest in working in the school, he would definitely grab one of them especially those that have demonstrated the capacity to be resourceful and active, and could be the right fit and an asset for the school.

These perspectives resonated with the views expressed by the project manager who stated that the first group of students found it easy to find jobs. The CECD training manager indicates that this is in part because of the relationships that the students build with centres during their practical components but also that they also assist learners through providing them access to the database of ECD centres that they maintain. CECD also has a strong network with centres and they are able to direct students to centres which trust the calibre of their graduates.

The CECD project manager suggests that the key challenge is not finding the students jobs but keeping them in jobs. It was explained that many of the students have been working part-time while studying and that they were earning more part-time than they would earn when working in an ECD centre full-time.

However contrary to this perspective some students report that there has not been any support offered to them post their studies and they have spoken to the lecturer about their plans but that they have not received any feedback. Students indicate that

they are unsure what level of support they can expect. But, other students state that they have been given a start and *"we need to take charge and do things for ourselves".*

Interestingly, the group showed a great willingness to continue with their studies. It was reported that many of students that had dropped out returned to the programme as they realised that they needed the qualification. Many of the current students stated that they wish to study further in the ECD field. Some of these students suggested that they intend to work as there are pressing needs at home but indicated that wished to study part time while working.

5.3.8 Were learners prepared for the world of work?

All students who were interviewed stated that they were positive about the theoretical component as it has helped them in establishing the basic knowledge required to engage with the programme further. They noted that their positive experience could be attributed to the method used by the lecturer in ensuring that everyone understands before she moves ahead. Students report that she also makes sure that those who are lagging behind are free to engage with her after the lessons, and she is always available to assist. All students emphasized that the key strength of the teaching is the fact that the lecturer can present the theoretical content in a practical way which helps them to relate it to their own context.

The students state that they engage with a large amount of content within a short period of time which sometimes can be overwhelming but they enjoy the support that the CECD trainers provide in addressing challenges and areas of difficulty. They also enjoyed the life skills component and stated that this would assist them in applying themselves in the workplace.

The training manager emphasizes that the seamless integration of practical and workplace learning ensured that students are prepared by the time they enter the workplace. The interviewee stated that the constant and substantive exposure of students to the workplace ensures they are adequately prepared to enter the workplace once they complete the qualification.

5.3.9 General lessons for SSACI model

The Western Cape Community ECD Services project model appears to fit the SSACI model. The seamless integration of classroom and workplace practice seems to work very effectively in the Western Cape Community ECD Services project model, though there are challenges raised in the light of the age and level of experience of the students as well as with regards to the dynamics between the students and the practitioners in the ECD centres (it is noted that many of the students are also likely to be better qualified than the practitioners and that this also be threatening).

It was found that through the weekly application of classroom learning in practical workplace settings that are close to their homes, the students develop a reflective approach to learning while becoming familiar with the working environment.

Further, identifying the centres on their own ensures they are taking some level of individual initiative and being located in their own communities provides an additional sense of perspective on the role they can play in ensuring effective delivery of ECD services.

It was also found that by combining these experiences with the intensive exposure to best practice environments allowed the students to gain a broader perspective on the profession and the possibilities associated with it.

However, there is a need to address the concern that the age cohort and level of experience is not appropriate to the qualification. The CECD interviewees all feel that it is not good practice to take inexperienced school leavers and put them in a level 5 qualification. Rather they recommend that there should be a more intense selection process and that the learners should complete the level 4 qualification, acquire some experience and then enter level 5. There is definitely a need to review the selection process and if the criteria are to remain as it, there is a need to ensure that the programme consciously builds in elements that meet the needs of this sector. It appears from the case study that even the changes that have been made thus far has improved the level of performance of these students.

The final issue that has arisen through this case study relates to the question of demand. Constraints in the ECD sector have meant that significant job creation is not likely to be realized. These constraints relate both to the continued absence of significant government funding to support the employment of ECD practitioners and the inability of parents to pay a level of school fee that would support ECD practitioners salaries.

SSACI has recently begun to review whether the ECD sector will be able to generate the kind of job opportunities that were envisaged. It is suggested that this raises questions about the viability of young people being able to access sustainable jobs in this sector. If this scenario continues then it is felt that despite the efficacy of the Western Cape Community ECD Services project model, it may be difficult to attract and retain young practitioners in the sector and the scope for job creation will be limited.

5.4 ACCELERATED ARTISAN TRAINING

The Fundi Training Centre was established by the Steel and Engineering Industries of South Africa (SEIFSA) to provide artisan training for the metal and engineering industries. In a joint project between SEIFSA and the Department of Labour, Fundi has been implementing the Accelerated Artisan Training Project which is aimed at fast-tracking artisan development to meet the technical skills needs of the metal and engineering industries. This initiative was prioritised because of the intensive infrastructural investment that was planned by government. Funding for the delivery of this project has been accessed through the National Skills Fund (Social Development window). SSACI has undertaken to augment this funding and support 50 young people through the Accelerated Artisan programme.

5.4.1 Description of Programme

The Accelerated Artisan programme is a modern apprenticeship, comprising 24 weeks of institutional training in a simulation environment, following which they can be indentured as apprentices in companies for around 56 weeks. At the end of this period the learners are able to undertake a trade test and if successful qualify as artisans.

5.4.2 Manner in which the programme was determined

The Accelerated Artisan programme has emerged as a response to the demand for artisanal skills. It was anticipated that industry would be facing a serious shortage of artisans and the project intended to tackle the challenge of the declining number of apprentices over the past couple of decades.

The Accelerated Artisan programme seeks to take young students who have done an initial qualification in a FET College and move them into an apprenticeship, thus creating an increased supply of artisans.

The programme was initiated through SEIFSA, an employer organisation, through funding from the Department of Labour and has subsequently been taken up by the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Industries Sector Education and Training Authority (Merseta). Through supporting young people to participate in this programme SSACI therefore seeks to contribute directly to addressing the skills crisis in engineering for industry.

5.4.3 Selection of Learners

It was explained that Fundi typically enrols students that have been selected by a company. However Fundi indicates that this has the disadvantage of the fact that they have little control over the level of foundational knowledge that the students have. They report that the students are not necessarily equipped with the foundational knowledge required to meet the demands of the programme.

It was decided that in the SSACI project Fundi would be given the responsibility for recruiting and selecting students.

The process that Fundi followed was as follows:
- Fundi advertised the programme and applicants were required to write a psychometric assessment to gauge the level of understanding and readiness to engage with the accelerated workshop-based training.
- Then Fundi established a committee which interviewed the applicants;

It was indicated by the Centre Manager that Fundi's minimum criteria for admission to the programme is a N3 qualification from a FET College as well as a matriculation certificate with at least 60% for mathematics and science. However, it was agreed that if the psychometric assessment yielded good results, they would make accommodate the applicant. The students selected also range in age from 18-26 years old.

The Centre Manager reports that this selection process has allowed them to recruit high calibre students. He indicate that this more effective selection process has meant that students have been able to complete the learning component within the specified timeframes available.

A trainer at Fundi supported this view and commented that the experience gained through this recruitment process has been invaluable as it has taught them to more effectively identify the type of students that can ultimately succeed in the programme.

> *"I think SSACI has set a benchmark in terms of how we could improve our recruitment strategies with other clients as it has proven to work and depending on how other clients responds to that, we may be on a brink of a strategy that could work and change the way we relate to the learners that are brought on board as the chances of them*

succeeding would be higher as we would have ensured that the learners are having a baseline understanding and knowledge to make it under the circumstances." (Trainer, Fundi Training Centre)

This is an important learning and highlights the importance of an effective selection process.

5.4.4 Nature of the programme being supported

As indicated, the programme is geared to developing young people into artisans in an intensive and rapid way; using predominately practical training (the training comprises 70% practical and 30% theory). The group of students are divided into three trades - Boiler making, Fitter & Turner and Millwrights.

Fundi provides a strong orientation process, assisting students to understand the working conditions that they are likely to encounter and what to expect from the training. The Centre Manager emphasized the importance of students "*knowing up front what they are in for, because Fundi will otherwise experience drop out of students which is obviously not desirable*". It was explained that the orientation also provides students with an understanding of the career possibilities which was also felt to be an important motivating factor for students.

The programme then provides an induction to the students about issues related to Health and Safety. They also recap parts of the theory that they learned at their respective colleges prior to enrolling with Fundi.

Within around 24 weeks, learners are required to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge needed by industry so as to be able to enter the workplace equipped to take on the apprentice role. This has necessitated the focus on practical skills to augment the theory that has already been acquired through a college. The programme is accredited and quality assured by the Merseta to ensure that the training meets adequate industry standards.

A Fundi trainer reports that, as a result of this pressure to complete the training within the time period the training is intensive and students, even with the improved selection, may require extra support to ensure they can achieve competence in each of the skills that are taught.

5.4.5 Type of life skill support provided by the programme

Due to its primary focus on practical skills, the accelerated artisan programme does not have a life skills component. The trainer states that they have discussions with students as and when they identify issues that need to be ironed out. However, SSACI deliberately chose to include a three-day life skills programme that would be delivered by a SSACI facilitator.

The Centre Manager emphasizes that Fundi seeks to instil in the students a sense of responsibility for their own learning. While the centre facilitates learning, "*they are adult learners and must be responsible for their own learning."* It is stated that this philosophy is emphasized upfront during the orientation.

Having said this, the Centre Manager stated that the trainers and the operational manager are always accessible to students and a culture of support has been developed within the centre. The students supported this view and commented that

they received a high level of support from their lecturers in the form of constant encouragement and motivation.

In addition, it was indicated by the students that the trainers also instil a sense of professionalism among the students and make sure that students get the attitudes that are considered necessary in a work environment and that they establish an ethic around conduct and matters pertaining to time management.

5.4.6 The nature of the workplace exposure /placement component

On completion of the 24 week institutional training, students are indentured as apprentices by companies for the balance of their training period up to trade test, approximately 56 weeks. Fundi provides the company with guidelines on what should be covered during this time, but does not does not dictate how this should be done by the individual workplace.

However, as these are formal apprenticeships companies are required to follow the guidelines provided by MERSETA.

5.4.7 What support was in place to identify employment opportunities?

According to the Centre Manager, after the students have spent 3 months in the system, they invite companies that are interested to interview the trainees and see if they want to choose learners to be indentured as apprentices.

If companies are interested they must provide a letter of commitment for the placement so that students have a sense of what will take place after their institutional learning component.

It was indicated by a Fundi trainer that one of the ways that Fundi assists students to access these placement opportunities and employment is through their strong links with industry. They state that their track record with the industries they serve ensures that the certificate that the students receive is well recognized,

> *"The other thing is that as a training centre we have a very good track record which accounts to the quality of learners that we have produced and they are doing quite well in the industry and all the companies that we have worked are quite impressed and satisfied about the work that we continue to do with the learners that they send to us and we have never disappointed, so I think that should count for quality." (Fundi trainer)*

5.4.8 Were learners prepared for the world of work?

Fundi interviewees state that the students were able to cope with the subject matter and suggest that students were ready to enter the workplace.

The students highlight that the trainers are able to "refresh their prior learning" and indicate that through the practical work, they developed a deeper understanding and knowledge of the areas of work and what is expected of them in workplace. That is, that the theoretical knowledge is augmented with in-depth practical exposure.

The students explained that as the trainers come from industry, they have the necessary experience to enable them to effectively assist students with any challenges they may encounter during their training and link this to similar challenges they will face in the workplace. Students also state that the trainers are

knowledgeable and helpful and provide the support needed in class and the workshop so that are prepared for what will take place in the workplace.

Further the Centre Manager explained that the practical exposure that the students' access extends to the maintenance of the machinery on site. The Fundi interviewee provided an example of what takes place: he indicated that where problems occur with their machinery, Fundi does not call in contractors but rather uses this as a learning experience for the students.

The extent to which students are prepared for the world of work can be seen by the following comment,

> *"They exceeded our expectations as they are very knowledgeable and also highly skilled to fit right into the mechanics of our company without any problems, hence we even decided with our equity committee that we had to offer them full time employment as they could become an asset to our company. The learners had very rich and comprehensive understanding of the work and that could only account to their understanding of both their theoretical and practical component, which they did whilst they were at Fundi and ours was just to further extends that and contextualise it to a real work experience and it wasn't really difficult as they already had a solid base of training as their point of reference. " (Employer)*

The Fundi trainer states that he believes that by the time students graduate the majority will be competent enough to attract the interest of companies, However, the trainer explained that if there are students that are lagging behind they assist them to a point where they can be competent enough to enter the workplace.

The Centre Manage states that the competence of students is confirmed by the results that students achieve: he explains that they *"track the students through their apprenticeship and to date are finding good results, we have not as yet found a single failure".*

The one challenge raised by students with regards to preparedness for the workplace is that they have no tools and they indicate that this makes it difficult for them to finish their tasks on time.

5.4.9 General lessons for SSACI model

From SSACI's perspective, the Accelerated Artisan Programme does not fall strictly within its model of vocational training as it does not lead directly into employment. However the advantage of this programme is that it offers students the chance to access a form workplace experience component which could enable students to attain a trade certificate.

The Accelerated Artisan Programme represents a response to the crisis of artisan skills shortages in key industry sectors. The programme seeks to inject additional learners into the apprenticeship scheme and wish to present this approach to learning as a viable route for post-school learners that have successfully completed Grade 12 mathematics and science, and have completed an initial FET College engineering qualification. Therefore the programme seeks to entice a new cohort of young people into artisan careers. Further, the programme is an employer-driven programme, initiated by SEIFSA, and this creates the basis for alignment of skills with employer needs and easy absorption into workplaces.

However this programme also highlights the complexity of planning training in terms of demand. Since the programme started there has been a change in the economy and this has impacted adversely on demand. While Merseta has made a discretionary grant available to employers who take on apprentices and there are tax benefits available to employers (and this has improved since the programme began) there will still be a need to monitor that students can access placements for their workplace component. It has been agreed that it will be critical to sustain this supply so that when the economy grows again there are skilled people available; however this is dependent on employers continuing to support the programme.

It is suggested that one big advantage with regards to continued support is Fundi's links with the industry combined with its strong reputation for good quality training. This positions it well to provide the institutional training for the apprenticeships. This once again emphasises the importance of the provider having strong employer networks to support placement and ultimately employment.

The other learning from this project relates to the selection process. It was indicated that the SSACI support allowed Fundi to conduct a thorough selection of students. Fundi suggests that this rigorous selection process appears to enhance the success of these students in the institutional training. Further, the precondition of a qualification from a FET College further provides the prior knowledge base to support the effective development of work-related practical skills.

However, the one area that may require review is the need for a more formal, integrated life skills component within the programme. SSACI deliberately included a 3-day lifeskills programme in its project and it would be useful to explore whether the inclusion of thisimpacts on the students performance in the workplace or if the level of support offered by lecturers as discussed in this case study is sufficient. If the lifeskills component proves to have a positive effect on the workplace performance of learners, than the SSACI project will have provide an important lesson for the Accelerated Artisan programme going forward.

5.5 HOSPITALITY SKILLS FOR 2010

The Hospitality Skills for 2010 project provides entry-level skills training for young people seeking careers in the hospitality industry. The current project (2008-10) involves the training of 300 youths from disadvantaged backgrounds in host cities of the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup, with the aim of placing them in meaningful jobs in local hotels.

SSACI has funded the delivery of hospitality skills by HYI since the initial piloting of the programme in 2003.

5.5.1 Description of Programme

This programme incorporates both theoretical and practical components and equips trainees for immediate employment in any of the four main departments of a hotel (housekeeping, catering, service and front-office).

The HYI project manager explained by interviewees from HYI that the programme provides the opportunity for the hotel to *"receive benefits up-front"*, particularly in terms of extra capacity in the hotel and the opportunity to observe a learner for 4 months before employing him/her, in exchange for the training of the student. It was suggested that this s a mutually beneficial relationship.

5.5.2 Manner in which the programme was determined

Training in the hospitality sector has been fraught with challenges over the last few years, particularly around attracting the right kind of talent that will be committed and productive. SSACI viewed the HYI training approach as an innovative model that, due to its rigour, could provide the sector with a more effective and sustainable skills base. The particular focus on the 2010 world cup in the most recent phase is a strategic decision based on the recognition of the significance of the event for the economy of the country.

The extent to which there is likely to be demand is further increased because, as indicated by HYI, the skills acquired through the programme also prepares the young person to work across the service sector. In this way the training provides the possibility of young people accessing a range of employment opportunities. The organisation highlighted the point that this is particularly significant as "this Industry is one of the last Industries where you can begin at the bottom, and because of continual " In House Training" can reach the top.'

5.5.3 Selection of Learners

The selection process that is utilised by HYI is explained by the project manager as a 3-stage process which operates as follows:

In the first stage students are able to apply for the programme and an initial interview takes place. The project manager indicated that many of the applicants are drawn by word of mouth of past successful students. One students commented that,

> *My cousin had already participated in an HYI and she was told to recommend other 7 people to participate in the next programme that they had planned and that is how I got recruited after they have had a telephonic interview with me. My motivation really was to acquire some skills and also explore possibilities of getting employment as I was unemployed and just sitting at home at the time. (HYI Student)*

Once the application and interview is completed students are selected to undertake four weeks of residential training in Grahamstown, half of which is spent in lodges and hotels in the area gaining first and exposure to the operations of the establishments. During this time, they have received basic lifeskills and technical skills.

Following the completion of the initial residential training, the students are expected to return home and conduct research around their community to explore tourism and hospitality prospects, and getting to grips with legal issues, including areas of labour law.

> *After we spent the 1 month in Grahamstown, we were sent back to our communities where we spent time doing some activities that were part of the preparation for placement and it is at these time when a lot of people have given up in the programme because they felt that there wasn't enough support because they did a lot of things alone and with no support but I personally felt that it was not that bad for myself although some of the activities required transport money as they needed to be undertaken in town and some people were not really open to engaging with us and that in some cases made it difficult for people to complete their tasks. (HYI Student)*

It was explained that the home based research is intended to test the individual's initiative, self-discipline and capacity to innovate and work independently.

At the completion of this phase of the programme the students that have produced a good project and demonstrated sound performance during the residential training, including technical assessment results, are then likely to get chosen for the internships. That is, the projects serve as a final selection point prior to the internships.

The students that are to undertake internships are then assisted by City Lodge who then look for establishments in different geographical areas to find places in which the students can undertake their internship programme.

5.5.4 Nature of the programme being supported

As explained in the previous section, the HYI training comprises:

- 4 weeks residential training at HYI in Grahamstown covering: generic life skills, an introduction to service industries and basic technical skills specific to the hotel industry. There is a strong practical component to this residential component as students spend half their time in lodges and hotels around Grahamstown. The residential training also includes 2010 "tournament knowledge" (i.e. information about 2010 teams, fixtures, venues, etc) and meet-and-greet phrases in at two European languages (German, French, Spanish or Italian), aimed at making the trainees more attractive as staff to hospitality establishments catering to foreign tourists who will be attending tournament events.
- A research project undertaken from home, covering some aspect of the world of work, labour law and/or the tourism and hospitality sector. This forms the basis for selection into the internship but is not assessed against unit standards.
- A 16-week internship in a 3- or 4-star hotel in one of the tournament host-cities, during which the intern gains supervised, practical experience in all departments of a large, commercial hotel. This would primarily be a City Lodge establishment, but students have also been placed in Protea Hotels and some independent establishments such as Game Reserves and Guest Houses.

The training is pitched at a Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework. The students do not attain the whole qualification but are awarded a certificate of competence in the unit standards on which they have been successfully assessed.

5.5.5 Type of life skill support provided by the programme

During the four week residential training, students are exposed to a combination of life skills and technical skills. Through practical exposure to hotels during this time the students develop an understanding of what is expected of them in terms of communication and behavioural skills.

> *The trainers just pushed us to do things as we observed from people who are full time staff in the establishments that we went to for exposure, we mostly learned by applying the skills we have actually observed and there wasn't enough time for us to engage deeper with the little bit of content that was presented. (HYI Student)*

There is also a dedicated life skills programme for 10 days which includes experiential group dynamics and a leadership course in the mountains. Life skills appear to feature strongly in the residential programme.

> *We were engaged mostly with the theoretical content that had to do with Life skills and some life orientation, we only did some few sessions which were also more practically*

based to some of the hospitality services. We had a very good time on those sessions as we were talking about real life issues and we reflected on our experiences that related to the adventure activities we did which included, abseiling, rock climbing and other activities. The trainers made us to talk about such experiences with the view of shaping our minds in understanding how they relate to our lives and how we could learn from them and improve on our communications and relationship skills. (HYI Student)

The focus is therefore on sound preparation for the challenges of the workplace, particularly in terms of working with teams and communicating effectively. The project manager claims that most of the students who come to Grahamstown get through the initial training. However, about 10% fall out before completing the project and a further 10% drop out before the end of the internship. The most common reason for dropping out includes health problems and transport costs.

5.5.6 The nature of the workplace exposure /placement component

During the period allocated for the project prior to the work placement, students are expected to generate income through some small business activity in order to finance their time during the internship. Over and above this money, City Lodge has agreed to cover transport costs which have been an area of concern.

The small challenges have been in relation to some logistics relating to our shifts as they would at times place us for late shifts despite the transport problems that we have communicated before as it becomes difficult to get transport when it is late at night because we don't even get the transport allowance and others included some hiccups that involves dynamics in the workplace amongst workers. (HYI Student)

The students undertake the internship for approximately 3-4 months. While the internship period was initially set for 4 months, feedback from the hotels indicated that 3 months is sufficient time to get exposure to all the different aspects of the hotel's operations and this has been incorporated into the internships starting from April 2009.

In order to guide the internship process, the hotels are given manuals outlining what must be covered during the time the students spend with them. The students must be rotated between different departments and get sufficient exposure to these.

Anyone who comes through to our Hotels for such an engagement could be sure of the fact that he or she will gain extensive knowledge on the operations of the Hotel and also get some insight on the managerial components of the establishment as they get to be placed within all units of the hotel from the front receptionist right through to housekeeping and other sections, although a lot of them don't like the general work a lot, they like to work at the reception and administration but we ensure that they do work in all sections as part of their learning also. (Host employer)

However, it is emphasised that these are only guidelines. According to the HYI project manager, it is up to the Manager of each hotel how the training is handled. These Managers are reported to be very accommodating and HYI has developed trusting relationships with the hotel group based on the recognition that the internship provides them with the opportunity to spot talent within three months without committing to employment. There is a high level of communication to ensure the placement runs as smoothly as possible.

Yes, they normally communicate with us prior to any placement and give us the heads up on the students that are coming and possible issues that emerge, including the learner personalities and also the areas that we need to emphasize on during the

practical's as a complement of what they have already been exposed to. (Host employer)

HYI meets with the group level management 3-4 times per year to plan and agree on activities.

Students are expected to dress appropriately and use their notes provided through the residential training. The students are visited monthly during the course of their internship – a field officer and the project manager sees them at least twice each and speak to them telephonically. During these visits, the HYI team checks on the rotation and what is being covered within each department and checking on the health of the relationship. All the learners are formally assessed against unit standards.

> *HYI trainers visit regularly and do the assessments themselves, we don't do any formal assessments, and they just talk to the supervisors in order to get feedback on some of the interpersonal issues as part of the learner's general assessment. (Host employer)*

> *They keep regular contact and they also visit us on site and we discuss matters of concern and also some interesting developments relating to our placement at the hotels and although it has only been two months, but I think the communication this far is quite adequate. (HYI Student)*

However, the fact that students are placed in various regions places a significant burden on HYI to monitor them all.

> *The only thing that I am a bit concerned about which might also affect the operations in this regard is the fact that HYI only has Duncan [the HYI Project Manager] and the other person working as management of some sort and also doing field work in all the regions, which I think it is quite difficult to manage as they are forever flying to all these areas and when they are there they only have limited time as they are scheduled to go somewhere else, so I think it could work better for them to get people in the regions to manage the programmes. (Host employer)*

These concerns will need to be monitored as it clear that the key factor that contributes to the success of the programme is the strong relationship between the provider and the employers, and the ability of the provider to monitor and assess the learner in the workplace.

5.5.7 What support was in place to identify employment opportunities?

The internship allows the students to make contact with employers for the purpose of securing employment once the internship period is complete. The project manager estimates that around 25% of students are getting employed by the hotels at which they were placed.

> *We have already 2 students on a permanent basis and we normally call back others for a part time engagement with us especially when we are experiencing high intakes in our establishment. (Host employer)*

> *I have actually recruited 4 from the students that have been placed with us which accounts to 1 students per each cycle, we would obviously want to do more and we also link with our partners to explore possibilities of employment and that is slowly gaining momentum as we even have one of the learners working overseas in London to be exact in one of the four star Hotels, so we try and assist them over and above the possibilities that we create ourselves. (Host employer)*

For others, HYI assists them to find employment through their networks with hotels. However, there is some concern as to whether this is happening, particularly for students in rural areas.

> *The only support that I have enjoyed this far is limited to the regular contacts that they make and checking with me in terms of whether I have managed to secure something and also promising that they would also try and secure something for me. I think HYI should do more in terms of linking us to the establishments that might need our services, even if it means getting outside the province and seeking such opportunities somewhere else as the other challenge is that Free State doesn't have a lot of opportunities as compared to other big cities. (HYI Student)*

While the relationship that HYI has with companies is based on high levels of trust and allows HYI to ensure the availability of workplaces for students, these examples illustrate the challenges related to assisting students to access opportunities particularly when they are located in areas where there are fewer employment options. Again, as with the previous discussion the different demand patterns and the way that this effects the selection and placement of learners will need to be monitored over time.

5.5.8 Were learners prepared for the world of work?

According the HYI project manager, the hotels that they are working with find the HYI students have a better attitude and are willing to learn and are hard working. This is expressed by employers as follows,

> *I think the balance is fine although I think the only way to do it in this sector is by applying and actually doing things and not spent too much time in the classrooms, hence I like the way the HYI people train, they actually emphasize on the direct application of skills through shadowing and directly learning from someone who has an in depth understanding of the work area. (HYI Student)*

> *The learners that comes through to us are very well trained and have the general ability of surviving in whatever situation that we place them in, they have a good theoretical background and are mostly interested in doing the work without having to be pushed or regularly checked or supervised. (Host employer)*

The project manager was also reported that where there are areas in which there are gaps, the HYI has been very responsive: One example of this was a request by employers that HYI focus more on work ethic during the training and that they have now introduced a new component which focuses more on this in the preparation of students for the internships. The project manager stated that this relies on the industry taking ownership over the training and providing feedback in a manner that allows the programme to be adapted to meet their needs.

5.5.9 General lessons for SSACI model

The Hospitality Skills for 2010 model places a strong emphasis on ensuring the young people who go into the hospitality industry are the right kind of people to service the needs of the industry. Therefore the selection process is rigorous and relies on the capacity of the individuals to be innovative and self-starters. They also emphasise the life skills component as they believe this is the core to succeeding in any service industry and for this reason indicate that they do not provide learners with stipends as they want learners to become self-sufficient. The HYI states:

"While based on sound educational principles, this is not an education programme. It is a "preparation for the job market process" guided by an understanding of Development and in particular the development of young people."

The approach seeks to not only prepare individuals for the industry but also to prepare them more broadly for career choices.

However, it was stated that the one challenge that emerges, with respect to this programme is that it does not culminate in a qualification. This design is based on the assumption that as the programme is highly practical in nature and that students will access further training, either formally or on the job, that they will be able to acquire recognition for their skills and progress up a career path. It is suggested that this may need to be monitored to ensure that this assumption holds, alternatively ways to support this may need to be considered.

The final learning from the programme relates to the value of the Partnerships; these are seen to play a critical role in the success of the programme. The commitment of City Lodge to the programme ensures that students get the best exposure possible and the focus on 2010 also means that industry requirements are being directly targeted in a strategic manner to optimize the value of the programme. This reinforces the findings from this case study and others about the value of linking the programme fields to areas of anticipated demand.

5.6 KZN RURAL HEALTH PROJECT

The Friends of Mosvold Hospital Trust (FOM) was founded in 1995 to support the work of Mosvold hospital. On the basis of a pressing need for the hospital to attract and retain qualified medical staff to serve the surrounding communities, the Trust began in 1999 to focus its work solely on a scholarship scheme. This scheme aimed to support students from the Umkhanyakude Health District in KwaZulu-Natal to obtain medically based, or related, tertiary educational qualifications and then to return to the district to work in one of its 5 hospitals. Due to the growing demand and resultant growth of the organisation, the Trust has transformed from a voluntary organization to having full-time employed management and staff and being run from a permanent office.

SSACI has funded the Trust in three phases, to a total of R3.6 million. Its funding in the third phase (2006-8) has supported 42 individual students.

5.6.1 Description of Programme

The Friends of Mosvold Scholarship Scheme specifically targets rural school leavers, and seeks to give them the opportunity to become rural health professionals. Students are allowed to choose any health-related degree or diploma that enables them to work at hospital, across 16 health sciences.

In addition to comprehensive financial support, the programme seeks to provide mentorship support as well as limited life skills training (including HIV/AIDS) to all students supported by the scheme. It also aims to support graduates and alumni to access a placement and ultimately work as local level health professionals. This emphasis on placement and access to employment within a rural hospital network is designed with a focus on retaining the skills of the students within the rural areas concerned.

In efforts to leverage resources from the existing provincial bursary scheme, SSACI has now stated that it will continue to fund students for one year and then assist them to move onto the provincial bursary scheme from the second year. As such, FOM is putting significant effort into trying to develop a relationship with the provincial Department of Health to facilitate this.

However, it has been explained by the FOM project manager that this is complex as the provincial scheme is difficult to access. Further, the provincial bursary scheme adopts a hands-off approach towards working with students and FOM is still exploring ways in which this support role can be continued under the provincial scheme. The other difference between FOM and the provincial scheme is that under the latter there is no obligation on the part of students to return to the rural communities once the training is complete.

FOM is therefore currently in the process of seeking to reach agreement with the Provincial Department of Health that FOM could continue to select the students to ensure the province gets the best candidates and to provide the ongoing mentoring for the students and organize the holiday programme (at FOM's cost). This relationship is not yet finalized though it appears that this arrangement may be agreed upon.

5.6.2 Manner in which the programme was determined

The FOM scheme draws its existence from the under-resourced rural health context, where health professionals are in short supply. The programme is focused on the development of an adequate base of qualified health professionals in the rural districts its serves. Through supporting local school leavers to train as health professionals and placing them in rural hospitals, the scheme adds capacity to these institutions in the short-term but also works on the assumption that a proportion of the graduates will deliberately choose to remain in these rural areas and develop their careers as rural health professionals. This scheme therefore falls within SSACI's objective of supporting rural development and job creation through vocational training.

5.6.3 Selection of Learners

Student selection occurs through the surrounding secondary schools. This takes the following form:

- Hospital staff, including graduates of the project themselves, visits the schools and talk to students about the different careers available in a hospital, as well the need to remain HIV negative.
- Grade 11 and 12 learners are also invited to an open day at the local hospital, where they get to see what careers are available in the Health Sciences.

Those students that then decide to pursue a career in the health sciences then apply to a university of their choice for a particular course. At the same time these students complete a FOM Scholarship application form.

FOM works closely with rural hospitals in order to ensure a long-term recruitment strategy. Thus once the application is submitted to the university students are required to volunteer at their local hospital during the December school holidays. This volunteer process provides the candidates with both the connection to the hospital and an understanding of what is involved. The voluntary work also assists FOM to screen who is willing and committed, as evidenced through hard work, as well as

having had to make arrangements to attend for the two weeks, including finding accommodation and arranging their own meals.

A selection committee made up of FOM, the hospital and the community then review the applicant and if successful candidates then sign a contract which specified that for each year that students get a bursary they will work at the institution. This review process was explained as follows,

> *I am part of the team that selects learners that are suitable for support after every academic year and that is when I start to interface with the learners before they can go to universities and come back for their placements and vacation work in our hospital and I can say that I haven't actually regretted any decision I have made regarding any learner as they are all turning out to be good people with hearts that are big enough to care and support others through their work. (Mosvold Hospital Representative)*

However it is noted that final selection is dependent on the applicant being accepted into the programme at the university to which they have applied.

5.6.4 Nature of the programme being supported

As indicated, the FOM scheme combines financial support, mentoring and placement. The FOM scheme involves relationships with multiple stakeholders including:

- the communities – for representivity on the board of trustees, advocacy and buy-in,
- hospitals – for placement of students,
- the provincial department of health – to assign students to the relevant hospitals,
- tertiary institutions – for enrolment and training of students
- schools – for recruitment of students

All university fees, accommodation and food, books, and equipment are paid for by the FOM Scheme.

Students are enrolled at various universities for health-related qualifications, during which they receive mentoring support from a FOM student mentor. During holiday times they are then placed a district hospital within the Umkhanyakude Health District for a period of four weeks per year during which time they are exposed to on-the-job mentoring and training from senior personnel in the hospital. Following completion of their studies they are placed in a district hospital (usually the one where they did their practical work) and are expected to work for the period of time equal to their study period for which they received the scholarship.

5.6.5 Type of life skill support provided by the programme

While studying, students are provided support by the FOM student mentor. This mentor is located within the Umkhanyakude Health District, and deals with the students who are enrolled in the various tertiary institutions, as well as those who are undergoing their holiday work experience in the district hospitals, and graduates who are working in the district hospitals. This support is provided through a combination of face to face or telephonic means.

The mentor, who has recently been appointed and was an ex-student himself, assists the students to address the challenges associated with moving to a large urban area to undertake their studies. This extends to assistance in organizing their academic work and to cope with other demands of the programmes.

This interaction also assists the mentor to identify students that are struggling and then linking them to nearby support people.

Interviewees stated that the student mentor post strengthens the critical interface between FOM and its students.

Coming from rural settings, FOM students experience difficulties in adjusting to the tertiary institution environment, dealing with the academic demands of the programme as well as the language of instruction – usually English, as well as organising the logistics of this move – for example finding adequate accommodation. Interviewees suggest that the constant contact with FOM assists to boost the students' morale and address practical individual needs: for example students are assisted to obtain local academic support and provided with the resources to buy needed books.

However, interviewees from FOM suggest that they have identified areas of life skills that may require additional emphasis as they are emerging as important in the workplace. These include areas such as human relations or conflict resolution, and computer skills. It was suggested that this would also open up different career pathways inside the hospitals for the students.

5.6.6 The nature of the workplace exposure /placement component

During the course of their studies, students arrange a placement at a hospital for themselves. This placement must be for a minimum period of four weeks of holiday work per year.

The agreement with hospitals is that they will take on people and will arrange accommodation. Until last year, the hospitals also provided food, while FOM paid the students their stipend. However, as of this year, hospitals have indicated that they cannot pay for food due to overspending in the Department of Health's budget so for the first time FOM has had to pay an allowance for food, on agreement that the original arrangements will apply again once the resource issue is resolved.

FOM monitors this placement through a working group that is established at each hospital. The working group takes responsibility for ensuring the success of the students' placement. One aspect of this role is that of ensuring that the students are effectively supported in the hospital. One hospital representative observed that,

> *"The hospital's responsibility is to arrange job shadowing, the designated professional has to pick up on the learner's abilities and challenges and then engage the learner and assist where required. This may also link to their theoretical content."*

There is no formal assessment of this component; however, the interviewees from FOM indicate that after the holiday placement they receive reports from the hospital. One interviewee from the hospital stated that,

> *There is a form that we complete that only complements the assessment that they do with their respective Universities and this happens at the end of their placement, we only make our readiness assessment by making the learner to shadow our senior*

staff and then slowly begin to undertake specific activities by themselves under the supervision of the senior staff. (Representative from Mosvold Hospital)

These reports are said to be very positive and it was stated that there has never been a complaint about a student.

FOM interviewees suggest that the key to the success of the placement is the extent to which the hospitals take ownership of the programme and provide the necessary support needed to make the placement meaningful.

The second aspect of the workplace experience takes place after the student has completed their studies. The students are required to undertake their practical work, "*for each year of financial support they work for us in the rural hospital".*

Students sign a contract for this payback period, and are made to understand that if they do not fulfil this contract then this could mean the trust is unable to raise additional funds. Interviewees indicate that students have returned to undertake this work and that this has not arisen as a concern in the programme.

5.6.7 What support was in place to identify employment opportunities?

The FOM project manager explained that the volunteering process combined with the holiday programme ensures that students are familiar with and to the hospital staff. It was indicated that if the students perform well, they are generally guaranteed employment at the end of their studies. Students confirm this view, and one stated that,

> *I worked as a volunteer at the hospital under the Social Work unit before my studies so before I graduated they told me about the position and the fact that they have actually made recommendations to the Department that I fill in the vacancy after I have graduated, so I didn't even apply as the job was waiting for me post my graduation. (FOM student)*

Once students graduate, most secure a post at the hospital which selected them at the beginning of their studies. Where no post is available in the relevant discipline, then graduates may apply for a post in any of the other hospitals within the district. It was explained that the circumstances in the district are such that there are always posts available.

> *On our final year we were given the forms by the Department of Health to choose the Hospital of our choice where we want to be placed and I chose Bethesda and luckily through the support of the people at Friends of Mosvold, I was recruited to serve at Bethesda Hospital and I love it as it is the Hospital where I was born and also my home town hospital. (FOM student)*

The FOM project manager states that in all of these processes students are assisted because FOM has strong networks and relationships with the hospitals in this rural network.

5.6.8 Were learners prepared for the world of work?

Engagement with this programme suggests that the holiday programme helps to ensure that learners are prepared to enter the workplace. It was stated that there are particular, challenges facing staff working in a rural hospital and that the programme

prepares these young students to adapt and work within these institutions. This is confirmed by hospital staff, one of whom commented that,

> They even have the right frame work of mind to work under the conditions that are quite common in rural hospitals, I always say that it takes a doctor to save lives but it also takes a very courageous and motivated doctor to save lives under the circumstances and conditions that most district and rural hospitals operates under. The students are quite lovely bunch to work with as they also bring their fresh and renewed energy that the hospital needs so much and also they are quite effective as they work very well with our senior staff. (Mosvold Hospital)

It was also indicated that the graduate mentorship offered by the FOM Scholarship Scheme assists the graduates with the transition into the hospital and also ensures that graduates have access to on-going to support which focuses on basic coping skills and problem solving.

5.6.9 General lessons for SSACI model

The FOM scheme combines: financial support, strong mentorship, practical support, and access to workplace experience, during the course of the individual's studies. The FOM model is seen as an innovative way to address a significant demand for critical medical services in rural localities and supports the development of a long-term recruitment strategy for struggling rural hospitals.

FOM's application and selection procedures are rigorous and this appears to ensure that the quality of the students that are supported by the programme is high and that the students have a commitment to working within rural health institutions.

The other aspect of the programme that is important is that it focuses on ways to support existing institutions. Thus it relies on the universities to ensure the competence of the individual through its existing quality assurance mechanisms. Instead FOM focuses on the provision of mentoring and support which enables the student to succeed in this environment.

The other significant aspect of the programme is the strong working relationships that FOM has with multiple stakeholders, but in particular the district hospitals. In particular the working groups ensure that the programme remains responsive to the needs of the particular hospital.

The sustainability of the programme depends to some extent on whether FOM can forge an effective and lasting partnership with the provincial government to facilitate the awarding of provincial bursaries while allowing FOM to continue to do the selection and mentoring of the students. If such an agreement can be reached it would provide consistent access to funds while still being able to provide the value-added services to ensure successful completion of studies and successful retention of skills in the rural context.

5.7 FET COLLEGE PROJECT AT UMGUNGUNDLOVU

In 2007 the FET College began to implement a new curriculum. Within the engineering domain this new curriculum (National Certificate Vocational or NCV) entails a shift from a narrow and limited focus on theory-driven technical knowledge to a more substantive curriculum incorporating the fundamental components

(English, Mathematics and Lifeskills) together with technical skills development through both theory and practice.

SSACI is funding a 3-year pilot aimed at incorporating workplace learning into NCV Engineering qualifications at FET Colleges so as to ensure that there is better preparation of young people to enter into artisanal career paths and that pathways into employment are created through partnerships between industry and colleges.

This intervention was seen to be important as colleges have limited or no experience in providing work-based learning and many of the colleges have not yet established partnerships with industry for workplace learning.

Umgungundlovu FET College is one of the four colleges in which the pilot is being implemented. 27 students were selected and placed from this college with 8 different employers during 2008. In 2009, around 21 of these learners who had succeeded in passing the NCV level 2 and who are currently enrolled in Level 3 will be placed again with employers along with 30 students who are currently enrolled in level 2.

5.7.1 Description of Programme

The focus of the SSACI programme is on the NCV qualifications in two engineering-related areas: Engineering and Related Design and Electrical Infrastructure Construction. These qualifications are offered at Levels 2-4 of the National Qualifications Framework. The qualifications require a combination of classroom-based learning and workplace simulation in a workshop setting or actual workplace experience.

The qualifications extend over three years and are seen as one of the routes towards the development of artisan status – with the proviso that graduates access additional work place experience once they have completed the NCV qualification.

The addition of the practical component within the new qualifications has placed pressure on colleges, as they have not had to provide practical exposure before, and only those colleges that had reasonable workshops had offered learners the option of enrolling in practical subjects for an additional fee. The new curriculum meant that colleges had to consider ways to provide students access to practical studies; this was supported with an injection of capital to support the purchasing of new infrastructure and equipment. However, not all colleges have been able to effectively utilise this money. Further, it is suggested that this cannot replace the need for actual workplace experience.

In addition, many college lecturers have not had experience in industry environments and have not had exposure to the equipment needed. This requires of colleges that they train their staff appropriately. This is an area that remains a real challenge in the system.

The SSACI pilot seeks to support the inclusion of a workplace component to enhance the practical components of the qualification and to provide opportunities for lecturers' to have exposure to industry and it is anticipated, to therefore improve their capacity to deliver the curriculum.

5.7.2 Manner in which the programme was determined

As indicated, the NCV qualifications represent one route towards artisan development. SSACI has supported a range of initiatives aimed at the development of the artisanal skills because of the critical shortage of skilled artisans in the country to meet current and future demand that has been identified nationally.

Learners graduating from the NCV engineering qualifications after three years are expected to be equipped to enter into the workplace and be trained on the job through an apprenticeship or internship.

It is anticipated that exposure to the workplace during the course of the students' studies should assist learners to make decisions as to whether or not they are committed to an artisanal trade, and enable students to enter the workplace with an understanding of what is expected of them within this workplace context.

Thus in summary this programme was agreed upon because it is envisaged that it will assist to ensure the successful supply of individuals that can enter the workplace and with practical training and support be able to undertake a trade test so as to qualify as artisans. This ensures a long-term sustainable way of ensuring that the pipeline of skills is working effectively.

5.7.3 Selection of Learners

This section of this case study does not reflect upon the selection process that is followed for the NCV; rather it considers the selection process that was undertaken in Umgungundlovu College to determine which students had access to the workplace experience.

It was found that the following process took place:

All level 2 NCV students were invited to apply to go onto workplace experience. The college posted advertisements at both engineering campuses and students were invited to submit written applications.

The selection criteria that had been agreed upon across all four colleges on the pilot were as follows:

- Students had to be registered for the Fitting and Turning stream of the Engineering and Related Design programme and from the Electrical Infrastructure and Construction programme
- Students needed to have achieved good academic results
- Students had to have a good attendance record
- Students had to have a good attitude
- Equity considerations (race and gender) needed to be taken into account – in this regard it was required that each group of students selected at a college proportionately represent the total group in terms of race and gender

At Umgungundlovu College's Northdale Campus, while performance was considered important and learners had to submit CVs, commitment towards studies, regular class attendance and good attitude were stressed. The students that participated in the project from this campus felt that they deserved to be selected as they were motivated and attended classes regularly. They felt that the selection process had been equitable and fair because anyone could have applied.

This can be contrasted with the selection process that took place at Plessislaer Campus where the lecturers graded students' applications and CVs and selected them on the basis of this. Previous evaluation reports suggest that this approach did not work optimally as there were many dropouts and replacements that had to be made before the start of the work placement. The students from this campus who participated in the project commented that they felt that it was fair that all students had been allowed to apply but indicated that they felt that the best students were not selected.

5.7.4 Nature of the programme being supported

The FET Colleges Project seeks to pilot a model of work experience over three years. This model aims to incorporate authentic workplace experience into the NCV engineering curriculum for selected learners from NCV Engineering qualifications (Engineering and Related Design, Electrical Infrastructure Construction).

The intention of this model is to expose students gradually to periods of workplace placement over the three years. The period of workplace placement will increase as the learners advance through each year of their studies, with limited exposure during their NCV 2 and increasingly more exposure during NCV 3 and NCV 4. In addition, the scope of exposure may increase with each year.

In addition a process of exposure to industry for engineering lecturers is being introduced. On the basis of an initial needs analysis the staff experiential learning in industry will seek to address some of their shortcoming in knowledge around industry technologies and work processes. The anticipated outcome would be enhanced capacity to deliver the practical components of the curriculum in the workshops.

5.7.5 Type of life skill support provided by the programme

The NCV curriculum requires the college to deliver fundamental subjects (English, Mathematics and Life Skills).

It would seem however, that students are struggling to cope with the demands of the fundamentals (specifically mathematics and communication) subjects, mostly because of their poor education background. Many of the students have left school after completing Grade 9 and had not coped with the demands of the school curriculum. It would seem they viewed colleges as an easier route to the labour market, and had not anticipated the demands of the NCV curriculum. Therefore, while they were overwhelmingly positive about the practical components of the qualifications, they were not comfortable with the fundamentals which they viewed as components that should remain within the school curriculum and not be provided in colleges.

To support these students the college has introduced a 3-day workshop on study skills. The workshop was delivered by lecturers with the support of a master facilitator (consultant). Students, however, report that they receive very little extra support – they claim that while they ask for extra mathematics lessons but that the lecturer is not very responsive. On the other hand, lecturers complain that when they do offer extra lessons, learners do not turn up. Students also express the view that there is a need for additional computers to be made available.

With regards to life skills provision it was found that the college primarily offers these through the formal programme. However, it was found that the college provided the

learners that went on the placement with the opportunity to present their experiences to the other students. This was built into the life skills component of a programme as it enabled students to develop skills such as planning, time management, and communication.

5.7.6 The nature of the workplace exposure /placement component

The SSACI project team worked closely with the college to develop the workplace component. SSACI also played a strong role in establishing the linkages between the college and the companies that would host the learners during the placement.

The evaluation processes conducted thus far suggest that the preparation for the workplace experience was an intensive multiple step process and involved briefings with companies, college staff and students:

The potential company was identified and if the company was interested in becoming involved in the programme then an initial planning meeting was held at the company to introduce the project and the team to the company and to discuss the plan for implementation, including how many students they would be willing to host and from which programme area.

In addition there was a discussion on each company's health and safety requirements and the approach to be employed in the project to protect companies in the event of an accident and provide for student's medical care. After this a tour of company facilities was conducted to give the college staff a sense of the learning opportunities that could be provided to students.

Then for those employers that had agreed to participate in the project briefing meetings were held. These sessions briefed companies about the NCV curriculum, the logbook that students were expected to keep, the structure of the programme on a day-to-day basis and the level of supervision and support required from both employer and college. Finally, a standard college-company letter of agreement developed for the project was discussed and signed.

Then in order to prepare the college two briefing meetings were held at each college – one with staff and one with students. The staff briefing meeting established the policies and procedures around the workplace experience, including documentation, the support to be provided to students and the link between the workplace experience and the college curriculum. Students were briefed around expectations, how they should behave and basic rules (including health and safety), problem-solving and support.

These briefing meetings were generally co-facilitated by a SSACI person and the partnerships manager from Umgungundlovu, who was the person responsible for implementing the project. The Partnership Manager took direct responsibility for communicating with the companies once the initial briefings were completed.

The initial NCV Level 2 workplace-based experience programme was five days long and aimed to expose students to the production process in a company and the work of an artisan. During their stay with companies students were expected to learn through observing and shadowing one or more artisans. The main focus in the workplace was exposure to the work of the artisan, so that the student gains a perspective on what it means to be an artisan and this can inform their decision-making around their future careers.

While companies were not expected to practically engage the students at this level, they were asked to give them small tasks if possible. The curriculum was translated into a single logbook which was designed to guide the experience of students during their placement.

While in the workplace, each student / student group was visited once and a phone call was made on the first day to check that they arrived at the companies hosting them.

The college interviewee stated that overall the placement at each company went well and other than one student not turning up on the first day and for part of the morning of the second day, resulting in the company sending him away from its premises there were no significant problems or incidents. It was reported that all other students were able to find their way to the companies hosting them and arrived on time each day and the companies reported that they were generally comfortable with the placement process.

The evaluation report found that while it was generally understood that the first encounter with the workplace for Level 2 students would primarily involve observation, many students had been given the opportunity to do more practical work such as sawing bolts or doing measurements. This had been positive in that it had exposed them to the reality of working with large, complex machinery which many had found "*very scary*". At Umgungundlovu FET College, students report that they "*thought we were just going to watch, but when we got there they were given gloves and told to do things. We were glad because we thought we were going to be bored.*"

After the workplace experience component a debriefing session was held for staff and students at Umgungundlovu. Umgungundlovu College is planning to introduce work placement in other programmes and thus used the college debriefing meetings as an opportunity to share the experience of the project with a wider range of staff, including those responsible for languages and life orientation. In addition, individual or joint company debriefing sessions were held.

The workplace experience component posed a number of challenges for the college: It was indicated that while the lecturers had monitored the learners during their placement period this had created additional responsibilities for lecturers and there was a concern as to whether the college would have sufficient capacity to monitor students if the numbers of learners placed greatly increased. College management were concerned about the capacity of lecturers to integrate the workplace learning into college teaching. Further, the evaluation conducted found that that some of the lecturers were uncomfortable when the students returned as they felt that the students had knowledge that they did not have.

It was also indicated that it led to a number of positive developments within the college. Specifically it was found that the interaction with the companies – even through the students – had led to NCV lecturers developing a better understanding about safety issues in the workplace which influenced the way in which lecturers approached safety in the college. Further, college management stated that while they were concerned about such young people (15 year olds) going into the workplace they felt that the workplace learning had impacted positively on student attitudes and had made them more receptive to learning and teaching in the college. One college lecturer stated that,

> "But what value came from every student is that this we what we need at level 2 – it gives them a concept about what they are training towards - what do people do, what

does an industrial environment look like, they have not had industrial exposure –this was very exciting, if more of this then over a period of time we will see an impact – this was overwhelming" (Umgungundlovu College Senior Lecturer)

This resonated with the views expressed by students who commented that prior to the placement they tended to think they knew everything but that they came back with a different attitude; they now saw the value in what the lecturers were teaching them and could relate it to what takes place in the work place.

5.7.7 What support was in place to identify employment opportunities?

Umgungundlovu College has a Partnerships Unit, which is responsible for developing and maintaining a database of partners in industry. This database forms the basis for placing students in workplace experience during the course of their studies. Through this placement, students are able to create relationships with employers and demonstrate their potential, which encourages employers to keep them on after completing their studies.

However, as the programme is a 3 year programme it is premature to evaluate whether the college has been able to support the learners to access employment and the role that the placements will play in enabling the students to develop these networks. However, it will be important to monitor this going forward.

5.7.8 Were learners prepared for the world of work?

Students stated that while the machinery they were exposed to in the industry were as not the same as those they were exposed to in the college they felt that would not have coped in the workplace if they had not been through the initial studies in the college.

However, while the college is attempting to put in place support mechanisms for the students to ensure that they achieve competence they acknowledge that there is a challenge around providing sufficient workshop exposure due to the time allocation in the curriculum. Lecturers suggest that more time needs to be allocated to practical training if learners are to "*get a full picture of the practice*".   The college indicates that this is in part because some of the buildings and facilities have not been completed and the necessary equipment is not yet all in place and hopes that once these facilities are in place the practical component of the programme will increase.

College interviewees also indicate that the project has given them an insight into industry's expectations regarding the kinds of students they would want and that this will assist the college to support the students more effectively.

5.7.9 General lessons for SSACI model

The FET Colleges Project seeks to incorporate workplace experience into an existing vocational qualification in order to enhance the employment prospects of young people, particularly in artisanal trades. SSACI deliberately adopted a strong intermediary role to ensure successful initiation of the workplace experience with the intention that the college would take over the relationship with the companies after the initial links had been created. It is suggested that while the NCV curriculum provides a more substantive and holistic learning, the access to workplace experience provides an important mechanism for students to not only gain preparation for the workplace but also demonstrate their value which potentially leads to employers retaining them in employment after their studies. The FET Colleges

Project illustrates the amount of effort and time needed to make the workplace experience a success.

It was also found that while the selection of the students was not optimal, the college appeared to have been reasonably successful with selecting the right students. This is evidenced by the diligence with which the students approached the workplace component of the programme and in the response from the companies with respect to the performance of the students. It is anticipated that this should improve further as the selection becomes more comprehensive and rigorous.

It was also found that the introduction of a dedicated Partnerships Manager and the strong support from the CEO of the college had been very important to the success of the programme and the extent to which the partnerships have been consolidated. The extent to which the college has embraced the approach to working in partnership introduced by this programme can be seen in by the way that the college proactively approached other companies that had not been identified by SSACI to expand the placement opportunities for students.

The programme also indicates how through direct exposure to the workplace the students obtained insight into what employers expected from them, what occupations were open to them as a result of their studies and how their studies will prepare them for these occupations. One specific finding is that the usage of the logbook was an important innovation and it assisted the college to understand what took place in the workplace and how this could be enhanced and taken forward.

It is noted that a key challenge facing the college is the extent to which it can maintain its relationship with the companies beyond the life of the project, and the extent to which the workplace experience can be extended to other students in the college. This will need to be monitored going forward.

6 OVERARCHING THEMES AND ISSUES

Overall, based on the random sample of interviews with learners and employers as well as the case studies, it appears that the programmes have achieved considerable success.

Key findings include the fact that 36 of the 50 learners (that is 72%) have accessed some form of work opportunity. Of these 32 reported that they were employed by an organisation, 3 reported that they were self-employed and 1 reported that they were assisting someone else in a small business As such it is observed that SSACI is achieving much higher rates of employment as compared to many other vocational programmes reported on in South Africa and that the evaluation team has encountered.

It was also reported that the learners had accessed what appear to be quality jobs: that is, 64% of these learners are earning more than R4000 per month and a further 19% are earning between R3000 – R4000. This finding is reinforced by the fact that 66% of graduates are above average satisfied with their current job and this percentage increases to 92% if one includes those people that indicated that they are satisfied to an 'average' level.

This section of the report considers which factors appear to have contributed to these results. It does this by drawing on the interviews, the case studies, discussions with SSACI staff and by considering the good practice standards that surfaced through the literature review.

6.1 SELECTION OF THE PROJECTS

A key finding emanating from the case studies is the value of spending time and energy determining in which area a programme should focus. It was found that all of the SSACI supported projects were determined based on an identified area of growth which would result in increased opportunities for employment. Thus for example the TECSAT College Scholarships and Accelerated Artisan Training Projects support individuals to become artisans and this is consistent with the demand for this level of skill that has been reported upon in JIPSA and other national processes. Similarly, the Western Cape Community ECD Services Project is in an area which government has said will be increasingly absorbing large numbers. In addition, the HYI was specifically reconfigured to address critical skills shortages in the hospitality sector and develop the skills base for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The extent to which SSACI appears to have achieved some level of alignment between supply and demand is reflected in the results already reported and the fact that 77% of interviewees report that the work opportunity that they have accessed is related to the qualification that they attained through the programme supported by SSACI. SSACI has an unusually – as compared to many other similar organisation - thorough internal evaluation process which allows them to effectively track and monitor the progress of their projects and to reflect on selection processes. This appears to contribute to the extent to which projects appear to align with areas of growth and need.

However, all these programmes cited also highlight the complexity of this process: changing policies and economic conditions can suddenly change the level of demand. This does not suggest that programmes should not be planned in terms of projected demand but emphasises why it is so important that SSACI maintain its emphasis on monitoring learners and changes in demand. Though it is not recommended that programmes should stop and start as changes take place but it is recommended that the implications of these changes be reviewed and considered as part of on-going decision making processes.

6.2 SELECTION OF THE LEARNERS

The literature review observes that good practice requires the partners to agree on who the target group is and what the criteria for selection should be so as to ensure adequate targeting of participants and thereby ensure that the programme reaches the right people. However, the literature review notes that this is often difficult in developing countries because of a range of dynamics, such as geography, availability of resources and funding.

The literature review also suggests that the design of programmes should take the sources of social exclusion of the particular target group(s) into account so that interventions can be more effectively targeted.

Of interest is that in most of the case studies it was found that there had been a clear process for determining who the target group is intended to be and a rigorous selection process has been put in place.

Notably, the KZN Rural Health Project project is focused on a particular group of learners – those living in rural areas that are accepted into a health related qualification – and requires applicants to have taken the initiative to find and organise a place in which they can volunteer. However, recently FOM has broadened its criteria to include students that are already studying who will be willing to work in rural areas, and the implications of this change will need to be monitored and understood.

In other cases such as Western Cape Community ECD Services it was found that there were conflicting views about the selection criteria – with CECD expressing the view that it was more difficult to work with young people who do not have previous experience of the ECD sector. It was found in this case that the organisation did not initially take the changed target group into account in the manner in which they structured the programme and that only once they had come to terms with the target group did they make the changes required to address the needs of this target group.

The importance of the selection process and the rigour in which selection appears to have taken place was also confirmed by the interviews with learners and employers where it was found that the majority of learners entered a learning programme in the area that that they wish to pursue in the long term. Further, many interviewees commented that having completed the programme and entered employment they were confident that they had selected the appropriate pathway.

6.3 NATURE OF THE PROGRAMME

This section considers the nature of the programme and highlights the issues and learning that have emerged from this research process.

6.3.1 Satisfaction with provider

The research found a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the programmes. Emerging from the interviews it was found that the only area of concern pertained to the quality of the lecturer handouts.

This point is interesting as the literature review highlights the need to use market mechanisms to attract training providers and emphasizes the need to balance targeting and quality "ensuring the providers can reach the right groups but also that the providers can deliver the necessary quality of training". However, it appears from this finding, as well as from the other results that the focused way in which SSACI selects partners has merit and ensures that the partners have sufficient experience in the delivery of the services that they will be offering on behalf of SSACI.

What will be interesting is to monitor the FET College Project as this is the one partner that has been selected based on institutional sustainability rather than existing expertise in an area. The project has been embarked upon with the understanding that SSACI will need to develop the capacity of the college to effectively manage the programme and the extent of this commitment will need to be reviewed over time.

6.3.2 Balance between theory and practice

The interviewees suggest that there was an appropriate balance between theory and practice. It was found that 78% of the learners stated that they have been given fairly good or good access to practice new skills and this figure increased to 90% including those learners that indicate that they have average access.

This was reinforced by the case studies which highlight the opportunities that have been created for students to apply their theory in an applied context in a continual way, this is notably so of Western Cape Community ECD Services and KZN Poultry Learnerships.

Other programmes also find different ways of enabling learners to develop practical skills whether in a workplace or a workshop – an example of the latter is the Accelerated Artisan Project.

However it is noted that 24% of learners state that they have not had access to practical workshops and 26% state that they are not that happy with the quality of the practical equipment. This will need to be explored, as while it is not possible for all institutions to have the relevant equipment it will be important that this does not adversely impact upon the learner.

6.3.3 Level of Technical Skills

It was found that the majority of interviewees are able to apply their skills as a central component of their occupation, and suggests that even those who are not employed directly to work in areas related to their training are finding ways to utilise their skills.

The one area of challenge is that only 38% of the learners felt that the materials gave higher than average examples from the workplace. This reinforces the view raised previously by learners about the quality of materials and suggests that there may be a need for SSACI to consider how it reviews materials and whether it offers support to improve these materials where required.

However, in the main the picture is positive, as indicated 77% of learners reported that the work opportunity that they have accessed is related to the qualification that they attained through the programme supported by SSACI. Learners spoke enthusiastically about the extent that they felt able to utilise their technical skills in the workplace.

Of even more import is that 80% of the employers interviewed stated that the preparedness of graduates to enter the workplace as above average to excellent. Further, 3 of the 15 (20%) report that skills on recruitment were excellent and 8 of 15 (53%) reported that skills on recruitment were above average.

These views were consistent with the response that employers interviewed gave about whether graduates skills were aligned with their needs. It was found that 80% rated the level of alignment as above average or well aligned. Further, 74% of employers stated that the lifeskills of the graduates were of an above average or excellent level.

It was found that where there were gaps in the technical skills identified these related to the practical skills related to a particular workplace.

In summary this is very positive and it appears as if the programme is achieving some success in this regard.

6.3.4 Level of Life Skills

This is an area that raises considerable debate and has a number of dimensions: this includes: levels of psycho-social support, core skills such as problem solving and then technology related life skills.

Psycho-Social Skills
The case studies raise the question as to how far a programme should go with regards to support and to consider what this decision means for the possible replication of the programme. That is, if there is an extensive life skills programme then this may make the programme prohibitively expensive to increase in scale.

For example, the TECSAT programme has an individual allocated to the students to provide both academic support and career guidance. However, some of the students suggest that there is a need for the programme to assist them with a range of personal issues. Other programmes such as KZN Rural Health Project indicate that inevitably these more personal issues become part of what the mentor must address when relating to the student.

Interviews with employers highlight the impact of social issues including concerns pertaining to substance abuse and the danger that students can go in that direction, as well as the need for students to be supported to develop increased levels of personal awareness.

Given the contexts from which many of the students are drawn it is inevitable that these discussions should emerge. It is suggested that many of the programmes appear to have found a healthy balance: that of accepting that students may want to talk through these issues and recognising that opportunities must be created that enable this if the students are to be able successfully complete their programme. However, the programmes do not offer psycho-social counselling and it is accepted that this is outside the scope of these programmes. Further, it is emphasised that it is

necessary if the model is to be replicable that the necessary balance of support and self-reliance be achieved. This suggests a balance between the project making available counsellors on a full time basis to support students on all psychosocial issues and limiting this support to for example a short workshop which considers life skills related issues.

It is recommended that this issue will need to be considered further, and that it is an area where projects would benefit from guidelines that capture good practice.

Core Skills
It was found that the majority of learners (92%) state that problem solving has been very important in the workplace, and 100% of learners believe that communication has been very important in the workplace. Interviewees spoke expansively on the value of these skills and provided detailed examples of the manner in which they have been able to use these skills.

This view was consistent with that offered by employer interviewees who stated that they particularly valued effective communication skills, the ability to work within a team; and a good attitude with regards to discipline and continual learning and development as well as the ability to undertake the work.

However while the need for communication was emphasised and many interviewees commented positively about the level of communication skills that the learners demonstrated, it was also found that this was an area that was reported to be of some concern. Providers commented that even with the selection processes in place students struggled with the fundamentals, and a number of employers raised communication issues as an area of concern.

This raises the question as to whether additional criteria need to be put in place pertaining to levels of communication, whether the selection process should be strengthened or if there is a need to provide additional support within the programmes related to the fundamentals.

Computer Skills
The final issue that emerged relates to the extent to which learners have access to computers. This is an area that emerges across all programme evaluations and there is a need to determine what is possible and the extent to which SSACI funded projects wish to enable young people to acquire technology related skills and in particular to achieve a level of competence in the use of computers.

6.4 ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

The literature review states that programme should cover a wide range of skills needed for the workplace with a particular emphasis on job readiness and job search skills. While the technical and life skills required for employment were addressed in the previous section this section focuses more directly on the activities undertaken to secure employment.

6.4.1 Extended Networks

The literature review notes that ideally social support networks should be put in place during and following the training. The review indicates that the most common mechanisms that are implemented to support learners to develop such networks is that of career counseling; guidance; job placement; mentoring/coaching; technical

assistance; and provision of market information. The literature review suggests that these support mechanisms should take the needs of particular target groups into account.

The demographics emerging from these interviews highlight the employment status of the parents of the SSACI supported learners. While this is quite diverse it can be seen that a large percentage of the parents are unemployed with large numbers deceased. This emphasises that the students supported by SSACI are unlikely to have the type of social networks emphasised by the literature as being critical for accessing employment.

Yet the programmes appear to have successfully focused on the development of such networks for the students. Students talk of the importance of the mentors that they have been allocated to their learning but also with regards to their ability to stay motivated and problem solve. In other cases students suggest that lecturers are playing this role. Where providers are strongly linked into the industries they serve, such as with KZNPI, HYI and Fundi, these networks are a natural extension of the training and therefore pride the basis for a comprehensive mode of delivery. Where such industry links are not readily apparent, as in the case of the FET College Project, SSACI has deliberately taken on a strong intermediary role. SSACI is then able to initiate these networks in their capacity as an intermediary. This ensures the project achieves its objective of enhancing employability in a more innovative manner, and is considered sustainable as long as the institutions take on the challenge of continuing to build and responsibly manage these relationships on an ongoing basis.

In addition, many of the employer interviews reflect on the fact that the placements provided them with an opportunity to determine whether there was a fit between their needs and the competence and attitude of the learners. A number of interviewees indicated that they had selected the individual for employment based on this experience. This again emphasises the importance of the placements for creating networks for the learners.

With regards to career guidance there was more of a mixed message emerging. Many interviewees stated that while they were assisted to find a placement, many of which led to employment, and to access jobs: they indicate that this was not preceded by career guidance. They suggest that they were simply allocated to the job that the provider could access. This was reflected in the results of the interviews where it was found that only 32% of learners indicated that they had higher than average access to career guidance.

However, as was shown previously it appears that these jobs are quality jobs and the majority relate to the qualifications that interviewees completed though the SSACI supported projects. More-over it emerged from the interviews that many of the interviewees have plans to progress either within their current workplace or in another based on the experience that they acquire in their current job. Many of their comments suggest that, despite any lack of career guidance that they may have expressed, that they have clear career goals and plans and that there has been a good fit between expectation and opportunity. Though it is noted that there were some exceptions to this – for example the Western Cape Community ECD Services project highlights the problems caused when learners expect a different form of employment than what is possible as learners are reluctant to stay in the jobs that are available as they lack security and are not well paid.

In summary this section suggests that the projects are effectively supporting the development of networks. It is further indicated that this result should be read within the context of the limited networks with which the learners enter the programmes. However, there is a need to explore whether there is a need for additional guidance being offered to learners with regards to assisting them to plan their learning pathways. However, this debate should be held with caution as there is a need to ensure that the initiative that many of the learners are taking is not undermined.

6.4.2 Assisting with the Placement Process

It was found that many of the projects assisted learners to carry themselves during the placement component of the programme and ensured that the learners were able to competently present themselves during a selection and interview process.

In addition it was found that providers are assisting with access to employment (the results suggest that 42% of the learners were assisted through the provider and/or through a placement opportunity, with a further 13% indicating that they were assisted by lecturing staff). This was reinforced by both the interviews and the case studies in which it was found that the networks of the provider had been invaluable in assisting the learners. It was also found that many of the providers had proactively established relationships with employers in order to assist with placement.

However, it is noted that those learners that could not find employment suggest that the problem is the absence of opportunities. This is consistent with the findings of the case studies which suggest that where programmes take place in areas where there are fewer opportunities it is harder to place the learners – for example Hospitality Skills for 2010.

There is an indication that, while some of the providers are being highly successful in placing young learners, there are some that are not taking up this challenge in a meaningful manner. Taking the SSACI model into account, it would seem appropriate that providers are required to tackle this challenge more effectively and be held to account for not doing so.

The one other area to consider is the manner in which these programmes support graduates to link with small business opportunities. While the literature review suggests that assisting learners to access funding and support to initiate a business is critical, this research points to the fact that many graduates have chosen to rather enter a formal workplace to acquire experience prior to initiating a business. This, from other research may be a preferable route for young people who have not had previous work experience and suggests that it may be preferable for SSACI to maintain their current focus on formal employment and not broaden this programme to include the initiation of small businesses.

6.5 PARTNERSHIPS

The literature review highlights the importance of high levels of co-ordination amongst social partners and ensuring that the different role players understand their responsibilities within a programme. The literature review also emphasizes the need to continually monitor these roles and ensure that they are implemented as planned and that when issues emerge that these are dealt with by the players and appropriate decisions taken.

This point emerges strongly in the case studies where it was found that in the examples where coordination and partnerships have taken place this enhances the actual training programme – such as the KZN Poultry Learnerships example where the theory and practice is entirely integrated, or the Hospitality Skills for 2010 example where they have adapted their programme in terms of employer feedback - and improves the changes that the graduates of these programmes will have access to economic opportunities when they complete their training – such as the KZN Rural Health Project example where students move seamlessly into employment.

These partnerships assist to embed the programmes in the particular sectors and/or localities in which they are operating, and thereby assist to achieve the ultimate goals of the project itself in terms of meeting particular demands for skills. The projects mentioned above all provide important examples of partnerships between providers and industry and seem to demonstrate that these types of partnerships are possible, despite the difficulties inherent in educational institutions working with industry. In these cases, the partnerships are focused on addressing a particular skills need and are therefore driven by industry demand, which assists to ensure the partnerships are optimally beneficial.

At the same time, however, there is a danger for the integrity of the programme if the partnership is imbalanced and focuses on the current needs expressed by industry. The educational integrity of the programme relies on industry respecting the educational process and recognizing the different elements of the learning process, otherwise there is the danger of reducing learning to specific training interventions linked to specific needs which may quickly change; as opposed to creating individuals who can continue to engage with the learning process.

The other related area that needs to be considered is that in some of the cases where there is limited capacity within the providers, the workplace experience has not necessarily been optimally monitored and this threatens the efficacy of the assessments of learning that are undertaken and the extent to which students can benefit from the placement. In the case of the FET Colleges Project, SSACI deliberately chose to drive the development of a logbook and a thorough briefing process with employers and students around the placement. In other contexts similar tools may be possible. It is suggested that where possible, it may be useful for SSACI to work with some providers to develop and adopt similar practices.

6.6 INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

The final issue that emerged in the course of this research relates to the question of sustainability. It was found that few of the projects have managed to establish effective partnerships with the government department responsible for the area of work that relates to the programme activity. For example FOM and the Department of health's bursary programme, or CECD and the DSD early childhood development programme (though this is more complex because a large part of the challenge is that the programme has not really been implemented). There is also the example of TECSAT which has not been able to secure the involvement of the college in the student support activities.

These examples highlight the question as to how can one work with the system to improve it if system reluctant to work with the project.

However, there are a few examples which point to the potential for sustainable partnerships; these include Hospitality Skills for 2010 and KZN Poultry Learnerships and even to some extent the FET College Project at Umgungundlovu.

In the case of Hospitality Skills for 2010 and KZN Poultry Learnerships these are both partnerships with business which if ownership could be transferred to the businesses in these industries it could be possible for the programme to be sustained over time.

In the case of the FET College Project at Umgungundlovu the question pertains to the extent to which the programme is integrated into the normal functioning of the college and whether the college can develop the capacity to maintain the partnerships over time.

In terms of the other programmes there is a need for SSACI to consider whether there are ways in which it can more effectively support the sustainability of these partnerships or if not whether there are other ways in which the programmes can be sustained.

6.7 ROLE OF AN EXTERNAL SUPPORT PARTNER

A final issue that emerged throughout this evaluation report pertains to the role that has been played by SSACI in this process. It was found that SSACI has played a critical role in supporting partners to reflect on what they are doing and to consider areas which could be enhanced and strengthened.

Examples of this role can be seen by the following:

- SSACI assisted Fundi to reflect on their selection criteria which emerged as a critical factor in enabling the programme to ensure that these learners are able to move through the programme effectively. In addition Fundi commented that through working with SSACI they are beginning to consider how to follow up with graduates in a more consistent manner;
- Similarly, it was noted that SSACI has supported organisational development activities within HYI: this has not taken the form of a general OD intervention but rather has focused on ways in which the organisation needs to be strengthened to deliver the programme. This has primarily involved holding a mirror up for the organisation to encourage them to reflect on these matters and develop a plan for areas in which they could strengthen the organisation;
- With KZNPI the focus has been on the way in which materials could be improved . SSACI has also assisted the organisation to locate the programme that is currently being delivered and to consider the way in which this programme could then feed into a more advanced programme.

These, and similar examples can be found with regards to the other partners, all serve to illustrate the importance of having a strong support partner that has an understanding of good practice and is able to enable organisations to reflect on their practices in terms of these examples. Critically, as the support partner is able to provide funding this has enabled organisations to make the identified changes and to establish the ways in which these changes enhance the impact of these programmes.

This finding emphasises that the importance of SSACI ensuring that learning and good practices continue to be captured and shared with partners. Critically it also highlights the importance of SSACI continuing to maintain the balance of ensuring accountability through strong quality assurance for monies allocated while creating an open space for partners to reflect and enhance their own practice.

7 CONCLUSION

In summary, this report shows that the SSACI related projects have been able to produce good results and the research suggests a highly motivated group of individuals. While the extent that this can be directly attributed to the SSACI supported projects cannot easily be understood, it minimally suggests that the elements in place within the SSACI model are heading in the appropriate direction.
The success of the SSACI projects appears to be reliant on a combination of three elements: the choice of programme, the selection of provider and the particular delivery model.

The discussions above have alluded to the importance of the selection of projects based on demand. As discussed, SSACI has been successful in selecting programmes that tackle area of skills demand that are of strategic importance to the country. In addition, SSACI has been successful in achieving alignment between supply and demand. A key ingredient of this is that SSACI has been able to select the right providers to deliver on the programmes. These providers have generally added value by having strong reputations or links with businesses in the sectors they serve but also indicate that they have benefited from the SSACI support in enhancing their delivery.

While SSACI's selection of providers has been based on assessment of those that are best placed to deliver the programmes, it has sought to develop a more effective standard of delivery that could realise the goal of meaningful employability through vocational training. As such, the preferred SSACI model of programme delivery incorporates:

- A technical skills training course, usually leading to a recognised qualification
- A practical component which enables learners to apply the skills that they have acquired
- Additional life skills training
- Post-training support in finding or creating employment, sometimes including a period of on-the-job mentorship

As illustrated in the case studies these four elements have not been implemented in a uniform manner and providers have been more effective in the application of some elements than in others. It is considered positive that SSACI has not imposed a prescribed structure for the delivery of the different elements but has rather applied a broad framework and allowed the providers to innovate around it: this has led to programmes that are contextual and are able to creatively apply the different element. Therefore it is not suggested that this project be utilised so as to restrict what takes place: rather it has sought to capture these various approaches and extract the key good practice lessons from each case that contributes to a consolidation of the delivery model which can be considered and adapted in the different contexts.
The findings suggest that there are a few key features of the delivery model that are critical to its success. It is therefore recommended that SSACI systematically

capture these in order to promote a standard of good practice going forward. These include:

- Selection procedures – these should be based on sound understanding of the target group, should be rigorous and combine interviews, competency assessments (particularly in English and mathematics) and written motivations. Opportunities for students to demonstrate their commitment to the programme prior to being accepted also seem to be effective in ensuring quality selection.

- Delivery of curriculum – the combination of theory, practice and lifeskills should provide a seamless learning process optimally preparing young people for the workplace. The more authentic the practical experience the better and the practical components should be integrated with the theoretical training.

- With regards to the workplace component it is suggested that the openness with which this is approached is a key reason for why employers are willing to become involved in the programmes and this should not be removed: however the possibility of enhancing this process through the use of logbooks or schedules to enable the employer, the learner and the provider to understand what ideally should be addressed during this placement is considered to be valuable. SSACI's innovative work around the development of logbooks for the FET Colleges project could serve as a model for other projects where alternative requirements for the workplace are not already in place. It is suggested that with regards to the life skills component aspects of this could be built into the practical training so that students can understand the relevancy of these soft skills to performance in the workplace. This will ensure a more smooth transition to the workplace and allow students to demonstrate potential from the outset.

- Support to students – The level of support that should be provided to students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds is a key challenge for providers. While it is necessary to provide some psycho-social support, it is also important to empower students to tackle these challenges as young adults and develop the problem solving capabilities required. Some of the models of student support illustrated in this report demonstrate the need to take account of the limited capacity of the organisations providing such support while ensuring that students receive sufficient mentoring that they remain focused and that their confidence is developed. It is also important therefore to set clear boundaries upfront about what such support involves so that student are fully aware of this and are clear about their responsibilities and what is available to assist them to carry these out .

- Extended networks – The availably of extended or "bridging" social networks is the most important service that providers can provide in terms of the transition to the workplace. This report, as well as other research conducted, demonstrates the value of such networks, particular for first time entrants into the labour market. Those providers who have developed strong relationships with the industries in the sectors they serve will invariably be more successful in facilitating access to workplace opportunities. These networks provide students with an inroad to employment and allow them to demonstrate the potential value that they could bring to the workplace concerned.

- Post-placement support – many of the providers have not taken on the challenge of post-placement support in a meaningful manner, and it would seem opportune for SSACI to develop a set of guidelines which guide providers in taking on this challenge. The creation of networks and the development of partnerships is an important strategy in this regard but this could be backed up with a programme of post-placement support which includes the provision of guidance and advice on possible avenues for advancement. This should be done in such a way that does not overly burden the provider but rather is simple and systematic: it may even be possible to rely on previous students fulfilling this role – as is the case of one of the case studies highlighted in this report. This would make it meaningful for students and would ensure that this element was cost effective and therefore affordable.

- Institutional Sustainability – The extent to which providers benefit from and internalise the support that is provided through SSACI is critical to their success. Encouraging providers to adopt the good practices above will enhance the value proposition of the providers. The case studies, and previous evaluation reports, have illustrated areas in which the projects could improve their practices. The challenge is to ensure that the projects learn from these processes: as SSACI engages constructively with projects around learning and change it is anticipated that this will in turn encourage projects to develop an internal culture of reflection and ongoing innovation to ensure they are constantly at the cutting edge of their field.

This report has highlighted the value of a flexible partnership that encourages good practice and innovation. It has also highlighted the importance of the role that a support partner can play – as highlighted by the role played by SSACI – which illustrates the value of an external partner that can facilitate a reflection and learning process with partners. It is hoped that a review of these issues can contribute to the on-going culture of learning and reflection already evident in these processes.

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