

***REVIEWING A LEARNING CURVE IN DEVELOPMENT TRAINING***  
***AN EVALUATION OF A YOUTH TOURISM AND EMPLOYMENT***  
***PROJECT IN THE WESTERN CAPE***

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## 1. BACKGROUND

This report is focused on an evaluation of the first phase of a project called the *Western Cape Youth Tourism Project*, sponsored by The *Swiss South African Cooperation Initiative* (SSACI) and implemented by *Bees Development Organisation* in collaboration with partner organizations sub-contracted by Bees.

The project commenced in mid 2004. Prior to that Bees had developed material for community radio programmes and were involved in a youth entrepreneurship facilitation programme that were part of a SSACI Community-based Youth Tourism Project. Following this SSACI asked Bees to develop the project under review.

After the funding was approved, three intensive planning meetings and further consultative meetings with stakeholders and partners were held. Bees had worked with the Bergzicht Training Centre very successfully on a previous IDRC project and this Centre was a natural choice as a training partner on the current project, along with other partners Swiss Contact, Radio KC and research consultant Denise Biggs.

The project was an initiative with the objective of linking vocational training and the facilitation of the entry of unemployed youth into the tourism industry as a career path, with the further goal of identifying opportunities for youth entrepreneurship in the small-scale tourism sector. As such a core goal was employment creation among formerly disadvantaged youth in a tourism centre in the Western Cape, namely the Paarl/Wellington complex within the Boland District Municipality. Hence the aims of the project may be summed up as follows:

- **To undertake job training of unemployed young people in the Boland District Municipality (more specifically in the Groot Drakenstein area of Paarl-Wellington) with a view to job placement in specific positions in the small-scale hospitality sub-sector of the tourism industry.**
- **As such the project was designed with a heavy emphasis on a youth employment creation.**
- **The training offered was of a type considered to be specifically required in the small and medium hospitality sector.**
- **The tourism sector was chosen because of its potential for growth in the region, with the associated promise of increasing labour absorption. Specifically, the rapidly growing hospitality sub-sector of guesthouses and bed and breakfast establishments was targeted.**
- **A second and somewhat broader objective of the project was the stimulation of the entry of previously disadvantaged youth into a growing and dynamic small business**

**sector as start-up entrepreneurs. These potential entrepreneurs were to be identified among the trainees initially selected as part of the employment creation objective.**

- **The location of the project followed from these considerations in the sense that the Boland district is a very picturesque and historically significant part of the country, with established tourism attractions aimed at both local and foreign visitors.**

It is important to note that the first phase or cycle of the project being reviewed was approached as a field initiation or **pilot exercise**. It might also be seen as the start of a process in development modelling, and that immediate outcomes were not necessarily the only purpose of the first phase of the project. Because of its pilot status the first phase of the project was launched as quickly as possible, and before certain inputs, particularly the results of a labour needs survey, were available.

For this reason this evaluation of the first phase of the project would not be complete without a brief sketch of the re-conceptualisation and modification of the programme on the basis of the lessons learnt in the pilot phase. This description is included at the end of this report, before the final conclusions.

## **2. THE EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY**

The procedure in this evaluation has been to:

- Inspect the project documentation and contracts, and conduct interviews with relevant project personnel and stakeholders to assess to what extent the project activity did what it was supposed to do. In other words, did it cover the expected activities and aim at the desired outputs?
- Assess how well these activities were undertaken and to what extent the inputs and outputs were of value, relevant to and focused on the goals of the project?
- Review what can be learnt for follow up phases of the project and future projects of a similar nature in terms of the specific techniques and strategies adopted in the project.
- Assess the output in terms of its impact, both current and potential, on the situation of youth unemployment and on the prospects for future careers in small enterprises in the tourism industry in the region. This assessment will be quantitative as well as qualitative and as such will evaluate the conceptualisation and design of the project as a whole.
- Finally to assess the project within the wider context of economic development, tourism development and human resource development within one of the leading secondary urban complexes in the Western Cape.

To these ends all available project documents were reviewed and interviews were conducted with the following people involved in the project:

**Marieta de Vos:** Manager at Bergzicht Training Centre, who took over duties after pre-planning meetings, on the retirement of the previous manager

**Sydney Davis:** Subsequent Manager of BTC from October 2004, after the departure of de Vos

**Lisette Lloyd:** Manager of the Placement Bureau at BTC

**Denise Biggs:** Consultant who undertook a preliminary Labour Needs Survey

**Amanda Potgieter:** Sales and marketing manager, Radio KC - Paarl

**Melinda vd Merwe:** Previous Manager - Wellington Tourism Office

**Elmarie de Bruin:** Previous Chairlady and Manager of Paarl Tourism Society

**Monica LeKay:** Co-ordinator of training at BTC, first phase

**Annetjie Ludick:** Co-ordinator of training, second phase

Four managers/owners of guesthouses

Seven trainees

Meeting with second phase trainees

Kevin Kane and other staff members at Bees Development Organisation, and

Inputs from an earlier Project Officer, Cyrus Ahalt and the current Project Officer, Gillian Hamilton.

Broader information was also collected to inform the analysis based on the documents and interviews and in order to provide background insights.

### **3. THE PROJECT PARTNERS AND PARTICIPANTS**

The core project line up included:

- **Bees Development Organisation, the project co-ordinating agency**
- **Bergzicht Training Centre which undertook the training (BTC)**
- **Radio KC, a community radio station in the district that was contracted to promote the project and issue a call for aspirant trainees**
- **Denise Biggs a consultant contracted to undertake a survey of labour needs in the district**
- **Swiss Contact, an organisation that is concerned to facilitate small business development and to assist small entrepreneurs in gaining access to finance and business development services**
- **The guesthouse operators who were enrolled to accept trainees for practical work and later as employees**
- **The trainees themselves**

### **4. THE PROJECT EXECUTION**

The following is a very brief summary of the project in operation. More detailed aspects will be dealt with later in this report.

## **Planning Meetings**

The project documentation and interviews suggest that at three planning meetings were held to discuss the design of the project in addition to numerous consultations. These meetings included consultants and partners, such as Radio KC, which was to promote the project over the air and Swiss Contact in view of the need for entrepreneurship development and possibly follow up training as tour guides and craft workers. The project was certainly painstakingly discussed with partners and stakeholders in the initial stages.

## **The Survey of Labour Needs**

A small survey was conducted among a cross section of 40 mainly small private tourism businesses in the area by a consultant, Denise Biggs, who also did a literature review. This survey, however, was clearly not intended to inform the initial (pilot) phase of selection and training because it started only after the detailed project planning and the start of the trainee selection and training. As far as can be discerned from the documentation, the results of the review and survey were intended to refine the second and possible later phases of the project. While a short report on the survey was written, and no doubt was used by Bees, the survey appears not to have been discussed in any stakeholder and participant's meetings, and the literature survey has not been available for this evaluation. The results of the survey will be reviewed briefly later in this report.

## **The Selection of Trainees**

In response to the project promotion by Radio KC and to word of mouth communication, 36 aspirant trainees submitted themselves for selection. They were all unemployed young people between 18 and 25 years of age with grade 12 qualifications. All were members of previously disadvantaged groups, namely Africans and coloured people. They were expected to be interested in tourism as a career. Here it should be noted that while grade 12 is the high school leaving level, the standard of education that it denotes is hugely variable. It can include school leavers who are equipped to proceed to tertiary education but at its lower passing grades and easier subject choices it can include school leavers who are not really employable in modern industry and commerce.

The selection panel comprised Kevin Kane of Bees, Lisette Lloyd, the Manager of the placement bureau of BTC, Monica LeKay, the Training Coordinator of BTC and Sydney Davis, also of BTC. According to Lisette Lloyd, the usual BTC selection procedure was followed

because no alternative approach and criteria were specified. However, it does seem that at least the Project Officer Cyrus Ahalt suggested a two-session selection procedure. It does seem as if Lisette Lloyd was assuming that the training programme would be much the same as the regular hospitality training offered by Bergzicht.

Of the 36 applicants, 15 were selected for training mainly on the basis of their personal attributes and apparent interest in and commitment to the programme. None of the people selected had previous exposure to the hospitality industry. In fact the later experience of the trainers was that the trainees knew very little about tourism and about commercial life in general, and that their aspirations and expectations were very mixed and in general not focused on the objectives of the training.

### **The Training itself**

The course content of the training at BTC consisted of:

- **Tourism Overview**
- **Laundry skills**
- **Cleaning skills**
- **Customer Care**
- **Life skills**
- **Food preparation skills, including cooking, the use of kitchen appliances, setting tables and table waiting**
- **A very basic introduction to Entrepreneurship and Personal Money Management**
- **Job-finding skills**

The contract with BTC committed it to conducting and documenting training assessments. No systematic assessment reports were available for review in this report but it would seem that these assessments were done to the satisfaction of Bees, and BTC records that after the completion of each module, facilitators assessed the coverage and performance. The Manager of BTC at the time of the commencement of the project, before Marieta de Vos took over, confirms that she reviewed most of the assessment reports and she and the staff also evaluated the portfolios of the trainees. It would appear that these aspects of the project were adequately carried out and that the training itself lived up to its promise (see comments by guesthouses ahead).

### **The placements for practical training and later placement facilitation**

The contract signed by BTC committed it, among other things *”To develop sufficient local networks in the tourism sector (in the district), resulting in the placement of all trainees for the December practical experience”*. In the event, the placements process was somewhat confused.

BTC claimed in interviews that there was insufficient time to organise placements for practical training, and that some of the trainees had to organise their own placements, with the result that there was no contact between some guesthouses and BTC. Three trainees did not turn up for their practical work, two others withdrew from the programme and one placement had to be shifted to another guesthouse.

Ten guesthouses agreed to accept trainees for their practical training and were scheduled to accommodate 12 trainees. Six trainees did not participate, as indicated above, while some trainees made their own arrangements. In the end nine (9) trainees received certificates, having successfully undergone both the training and the practical work.

### **The final outcome**

Some of the trainees were no longer interested in the hospitality industry at the end of the programme and did not seek relevant employment. **Of the nine trainees who received certificates, five are employed but only three are employed in the tourism sector. Four are unemployed.** Clearly there was some unravelling at the end of the project phase.

The contract between Bees and BTC is anything but clear on the responsibility for the employment placements. The contract reads that BTC was to *”assist Bees and relevant partners in initiation phase of February employment placement, including identification of possible stay on opportunities (at the guesthouses where practical work was done)”*. Nobody seemed to take final responsibility for the employment of the trainees and indeed the contract does not specify where the critical responsibility resided. BTC did not make all the successful placements and Radio KC stepped in to assist. Radio KC was generally unhappy with the process of placements.

Hence the final outcome of the programme reflects very modest success as a job creation exercise. In fact, three full successes out of 15 in the sense of employment in the tourism sector would hardly justify the effort and resources that went into the project. There were indirect benefits for trainees, however, and valuable lessons were learnt on what was a project intended to develop a model. Factors in the successes and failures of the project will be discussed below.

## **5. THE EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT AS A WHOLE**

### **5.1 The scope of human resource needs that the project was designed to address**

In assessing the significance of the project and its contribution, the survey of Labour Needs is useful. But this author's interpretation of the results differs significantly from those in the report written for the project.

Recall that this study covered 40 mainly small businesses in the tourism sector in Paarl and Wellington, some 65% of whom employed less than ten people. Their personnel were mainly employed on a permanent basis although some increased their personnel with temporary appointments in peak season. As far as can be detected the average employment in the sample was around seven people.

One of the key features of the findings is a disjuncture between immediate and past performance and the expectations for the future. This contradiction was not sufficiently emphasized in the survey report.

Some three quarters of the respondents indicated that activity in the tourism sector is currently growing, as seen in numbers of tourists, enquiries, bookings, sales tours and the attractions in the area. Only 20% of the 40 respondents were currently experiencing stagnation or decline in their own businesses. Hence the hospitality industry seems to have expanded significantly in the area and most small hospitality facilities are getting busier.

Only nine of the 40 respondents were pessimistic about the immediate future, due mainly to the strong Rand, lack of suitable infrastructure, crime, vagrancy and street children in the area. However, nearly 90% of the respondents saw a positive future for tourism in the medium to longer term. No fewer than 39 out of the 40 businesses confidently expected that their businesses would grow in the future.

As one might expect, most of the businesses surveyed expected their labour needs and intake to grow in the future. Many also expressed a need for more trained staff. The training needs perceived by the businesses surveyed seem to be concentrated mainly on customer care, communication skills, sales, computer skills and general business skills. A few more specialized

or higher-level skills were also mentioned as well as a lack of suitably trained senior staff. Approximately 50% of the respondents feel that current recruits are lacking in the required attributes, knowledge or skills. On the face of it these responses would seem to indicate substantial future labour absorption and a significant need for skills training for the tourism hospitality industry. It certainly is possible that these developments will occur and that the project as conceptualised was well targeted as a model of training for the small hospitality sector. It is at least equally possible, however, that the demand for skilled human resources will be disappointing.

In this author's experience, small business people typically overestimate both their growth and labour needs in the future; hence the survey results can be deceptive. It is therefore very possible that the project planning should have considered alternative training strategies. Why?

One has to interpret future expectations in the light of current performance. Significantly, the survey results show that of the 40 businesses surveyed only slightly over 20% had increased their staff over the previous year – a year which, by their own accounts had seen significant growth. Three quarters of the businesses recruited staff informally through the networks of their existing employees and only ten used employment agencies or advertised for staff. Only some six of the 40 businesses surveyed offered any formal training in-house and the majority has tended to cope by providing in service "training" at various levels, most of it no more than simple induction training.

In other words, in the period of past growth, small tourism businesses have tended to get by with a minimum of deviation from the typical pattern of employing new people from among the contacts of their current employees. They teach their new employees skills as the need arises.

It is in the nature of small businesspeople to be optimistic about the future and therefore unrealistic in their future expectations of labour needs. The current and immediate past records suggest that an increase in labour in the sub-sector will not be large and that most of the additional recruits will be drawn from very local networks, the skills problems notwithstanding. The hospitality industry is not going to be a panacea for unemployment in the area. Nor is it going to generate a large need for more sophisticated training than the induction training typical of small guesthouses.

Guesthouses generally employ a minimum of new people, at levels of remuneration that are as modest as possible. The small size of the workforces means that most employees are expected to perform a range of tasks including very menial tasks like cleaning and even gardening. The employers also generally do not see a need to advertise for employees with specific skills. Hence, while the skills needs that they identify are genuine, the structure of their employment is not such as to allow more specialized appointments. If they have a computer-trained employee, for example, it is more than likely that the person will have to clean toilets as well. The staffing components of the businesses are also not growing sufficiently fast to allow an elaboration of positions in the structure of their employment. What most of them need, ideally, are more skilled staff who can assist in technical and managerial functions but who will be prepared to accept a routine involving some fairly lowly tasks – better skilled and sophisticated "girl Fridays" in aprons or blue overalls.

A former Manager of the Wellington Tourism Bureau on the basis of 20 years experience identified many of these very important constraints on labour absorption. With hindsight perhaps, she should have been consulted very thoroughly in the planning of the project. In fairness, however, another informant, Mr. Gerald Frayter of Paarl was consulted and according to Bees gave useful insights on tourism employment prospects.

## **5.2 The project implementation**

The basic training at BTC seems to have been successful as a vocational skills training exercise. In general the guesthouse owners interviewed for this evaluation were positive about the training, some even saying that the trainees were better prepared than their own long-standing and self-trained employees. It does seem, however, that the training was very much along the lines of the standard courses offered at the centre. Bees was expecting more and the project conceptualisation and all the early planning meetings would also have suggested more than the standard training. In fact the level of payment specified in the Bergzicht contract also suggested more than the standard training. Bergzicht on the other hand insist that no additional specifications were given to cause them to deviate from a proven model in which they take pride.

What seems to have happened here is that the expectations of Bees and those implied by the broad project conceptualisation were not translated into a specified methodology, curriculum and training plan. Bees assumed that BTC would respond to the broad conceptualisation but

BTC would argue that had the conceptualisation been made operational in terms of curriculum and training plan they would have implemented it. **I conclude that there was a step missing and that this missing step – a concise practical content-related training outline – caused the mismatch between Bees expectations and BTC training delivery.**

My second conclusion flows from the questions raised in the last section. It can be argued that the survey of labour needs should have been completed and the results debated prior to fixing the training design and the target market within the tourism sector. In other words the results should have been "work shopped" in a small, high-expertise testing group. As it appears from the available documentation, the survey results were not really discussed in a planning meeting at all. Certainly, the first phase was a pilot, but a pilot of what? **It was a pilot of field implementation but it could not be a pilot of a finally conceptualised project because a full interpretation of the labour needs survey, as well as other inputs (such as those of Mr. Frayter of Paarl referred to earlier), were not available prior to the pilot. I conclude that the full conceptualisation of the project was not available to shape the first pilot phase.**

The third observation is that although the key participants performed their roles well, in one case a support staff member let the project down rather badly. In some of the interviews it was claimed that a person from Bees who is referred to as the "secretary" but who was in fact the Project Officer after Cyrus Ahalt and before Gillian Hamilton, was very late for meetings several times and also unable to pick up the fact that the practical placement process was not going well at all. In its coordinating role Bees should have taken steps to see that someone in BTC was taking full responsibility for the placements. As it was the role was shared between BTC and Radio KC, but only after what appears to have been a delay.

BTC also claims that while it nominated a large number of people for invitation to an important launching "Open Day", the Project Officer in question did not follow up on the invitations, as a result of which it was very poorly attended.

**An efficient continuity person is vital in any project, and for a period from January to April 2005, this role was effectively absent.**

Continuity problems also affected the performance of BTC. Although the training as such seemed to go smoothly, the placement of trainees for practical training and the final job placement were problematic, as already mentioned. Possibly this was due to the fact that the

Manager of BTC during the early planning phase retired, and the staff that assumed responsibility relied too much on the wording of the contract between Bees and BTC, wording which was not always very clear. The parts of the contract relating to placements were as follows: ” *to develop sufficient networks in the tourism sector, resulting in the placement of all trainees for December practical experience*”, and ”*to assist Bees and relevant partners in initiation phase of February employment placement ...*”. Neither the words ”resulting in ”, nor ”assist in initiation phase” indicate clearly where the figurative buck stops. Because the continuity function was faulty and because the principals, Kevin Kane of Bees and the subsequent Manager/Managers of BTC, left this critical responsibility to people who did not appear to take ”ownership” of the project, the ambiguous wording of the contract seemed to have some unfortunate consequences. Possibly verbal agreements were made to cover the issues but the people who were to implement the decisions were not supervised.

Possibly there are other explanations as well, but the basic fact is that the continuity person, the Project Officer in the coordinating agency, did not or could not do her job well enough to ensure the necessary throughputs in terms of placements. The fact that she operated at a distance probably aggravated the situation. **I conclude that neither the contract with BTC nor the Project Officer from January to April 2005 itemised clearly and unambiguously the tasks that BTC had to perform in respect of networking and placements.**

### **5.3 Some detailed ”design” problems**

In the interviews the following issues were raised that may point to some detailed design and timing problems in the project:

- The time available after completion of formal training and the December practical placement period was too limited to allow the placements to be as careful as they should have been
- There was great debate about whether or not December, a very busy month for guesthouses, was the best time for practical training. Some guesthouses found it appropriate but for most it was unsuitable
- Some interviewees are convinced that the training should have taken place in the Paarl-Wellington area so that the trainees would be more familiar with the settings of their eventual placement

- While Radio KC marketed the project among prospective trainees, there was much less marketing of the project to prospective employers. An opinion expressed in the evaluation interviews was that the outreach to employers should in fact have gone beyond marketing and should have been aimed at enrolling employers as fully fledged partners in the project, with pre-arranged visits to the selected employers to make sure that their expectations were appropriate. Interviews with guesthouses suggest that they would have been willing to conduct an induction programme for the trainees with an emphasis on their expectations as employers.

#### **5.4 Trainee selection and managing trainee expectations**

These are very important issues, rivalling the importance of the training itself within the project.

A view was very firmly expressed in the evaluation interviews that the selection process could have been improved. As already pointed out, BTC staff said that in the absence of specific guidelines, they simply applied their normal selection criteria. It seems however, that selection could have been tightened in the following ways:

- People who were already well-educated and simply looking to gain another certificate or practical experience should have been identified and excluded
- Criteria based on the very diverse range of a skills and attributes expected by guesthouses should have been more systematically applied in the selection process
- The selection should have excluded people whose expectations outstripped the short term rewards of work in the guesthouses
- The selection should have differentiated between the people being trained for employment and those being trained as a basis for starting their own businesses, because their programme should have accommodated the very different needs of the aspirant entrepreneurs.

In order to achieve the results above, it has been suggested by BTC staff that the selection should have been conducted in three sessions, with the final session intended to screen out the unsuitable candidates. Most importantly, the criteria for final acceptance should have been systematically established with indicators specified.

A major problem in the project was that the expectations of trainees were often not oriented to what the project could deliver. Once selected, the trainees should have been given a few very

thorough briefing and orientation sessions, run by a good communicator, including exposure to guesthouses, in order to avoid some of the mismatches that occurred in the project.

More comments will be made about selection and trainee guidance in the conclusions at the end.

## **6. DRAWING EVIDENCE TOGETHER**

### **6.1 Assessing the initial conceptualisation of the project**

Firstly, the evidence from a careful interpretation of the Labour Needs Survey suggests that the project should not be focused on job-creation as a meaningful quantitative goal. The scope for jobs on a meaningful scale in the private hospitality sector is simply too limited.

This scope becomes even more limited in the light of the actual complexity of the roles for which trainees have to be prepared. Interviews with owners of guesthouses confirmed that the apparently simple job of being a paid employee in a guesthouse requires some very unique attributes, some of them contradictory. The owners detailed the attributes of employees as follows:

- Both female and male recruits are needed
- Appearance counts – recruits have to show a measure of "class" aside from being presentable and neat.
- Sociability is vital - communication skills need to be developed. Guests expect both friendliness and competence
- Specific skills that are essential include cleaning, laundry, cooking at least to the level of breakfasts, table skills, table waiting skills, and more broadly customer care and life skills and general knowledge and knowledge of the area. Some interviewees included even more specific skills like bartending, knowledge of security and conflict management skills. Yet others expected some management skills and computer/typing skills.
- Broader knowledge and information that trainees are expected to have includes some specifics about the area - where the post office is, banks, doctors, police, hospitals, etc, as well as rudimentary knowledge of the tourist attractions, environment and history of the area.
- The trainees also need to be able to talk about their communities and their life styles.
- Hours of work are long -- 7H00 to 19H00

- The tempo of work requires diligence, ability to meet deadlines and high energy.
- "Incidental" skills and good judgement is also needed – they must be able and willing to help in a crisis situation, be able to work under stress and to deal with difficult customers.
- Relationship to employer has to be a well-judged mix of formality and friendliness
- Employers expect employees above the floor level to share some "managerial" or owner responsibilities.
- Faults and mistakes that are not tolerated are petty theft, breaking property more than a few times, over familiarity with guests, alcoholism and staying away from work without good reasons.

How many young people at any level can display all these attributes? These are also often skills that accumulate with maturity. This profile gives some idea of how demanding the roles are for which the selected people on the project were prepared. As in the case of junior policemen, nurses, secretaries and tour guides, to mention just a few examples, the day-to-day skills and judgment required can exceed that of well paid and respected professionals. Yet, many, including many trainees themselves, regard the roles for which the trainees are prepared as routine and trivial.

While one is tempted to say a great deal about how human resources are ranked and managed in our societies, the point being made is that the "training" on a project like the one being evaluated has to at least incorporate more preparation for situational skills (incidental skills), a great deal more time devoted to the orientation of trainees and the management of their expectations and the addition of aftercare in the early stages of a trainees placement.

Given what is required in the training and the support during and after training, given also that the numbers of such jobs may be more limited than one imagines (see interpretation of the labour needs survey above) and taking into account that the career prospects of employees in dominantly small businesses are highly limited, one has to ask whether the cost of doing this kind of project as thoroughly as necessary would be warranted. Bees wanted the training to be more elaborated than it was, and the actual skills theoretically required of recruits are quite formidable, but the image of the work and the actual jobs and careers on offer are highly limited and insufficient to motivate the trainees.

The training inputs and costs would be warranted only if:

- ➔ The basic training is broadened to cover more types of work than assisting in guesthouses, in order to significantly widen career prospects. This would have to be done without running at cross-purposes to hotel school training, which is really of a different type altogether.
- ➔ (Or) the selection and the training is specifically geared to preparing trainees for opening and or running small businesses in the broader tourism industry. This would mean broadening the curriculum and lengthening the training period. It would also mean that the selection process would have to deal with the complex and vexed issue of the identification of entrepreneurial potential. This challenge can and has to be faced, however.
- ➔ And if the selection and training were to be upgraded to cover more aspects of **management** not only of guesthouses but also of other kinds of small resorts and public facilities involving both catering, customer-care and people management.

## **6.2 The project was beset by some problematic discontinuities**

The discontinuity of the change in management of the Bergzicht Training Centre could not be avoided but it had serious consequences in that by the time training and placement started BTC had forgotten the broad aims set in the initial planning and negotiations.

The irregular performance of one of the Bees Project Officers was particularly serious because this person was in a position to ensure that certain responsibilities at a crucial stage of the project were met on time and that events were organised properly. This problem has now been fully rectified in Bees with the appointment of Gillian Hamilton, as the early review of the second phase shows. The mishap with the previous Project Officer was perhaps understandable because the person at fault created a very favourable superficial impression that was hugely misleading.

## **6.3 The major problem on the project was in the selection process and the orientation of candidates thereafter.**

Earlier discussion on the selection process need not be repeated. Suffice it to say that the selection procedures in a project intended to form the basis for the training and implementation model cannot simply be a routine process of assessing candidates as if the training was to be for routine roles. BTC's admission that they simply applied their usual criteria in the absence of further specified criteria indicates the problem. The selection should have given meticulous

attention to the expectations of candidates and this is difficult without multiple sessions and some exposure to the employment situations.

The issue of so-called menial work that some trainees regarded as being beneath their dignity should have been dealt with firmly from the outset. In the current culture of high aspirations among formerly disadvantaged youth in South Africa the value of the taking detailed "menial" work seriously has been obscured, and is in fact one of the many factors in the serious capacity problems in service delivery.

BTC lapsed in that they had forgotten that they were not simply selecting for a training course but that they were selecting candidates for a "development model".

It has to be concluded that the project should have devoted much more time and attention to developing the criteria of selection and dealing with and managing the expectations of trainees, but how possible is this? Here one would be attempting to select unemployed young people with limited life skills and experience, and with rather limited qualifications by current standards, for positions that most people regard as humble to say the least and which offer limited career prospects, but which require a very wide and demanding range of hard skills and subtle attributes. Does common sense not indicate that the jobs on offer are really somewhat of an anomaly and not suited to either the attributes or the expectations of unemployed youth?

## **7. A PREVIEW OF THE SECOND CYCLE**

Quite independently of this evaluation, the project participants have quite significantly re-conceptualised the second cycle, in which training at BTC is in progress. Key features of the second phase can be briefly summed up as follows:

- On the basis of fairly lengthy consultations, the emphasis has shifted away from job creation in guesthouses to training for career development as **Wine Tasting Locale Assistants** in the buoyant wine industry in the Boland. These are more specialised occupations with prospects of promotion to more responsible positions in an important tourist and wine-consumer service.
- Hence the occupational context no longer has the "stigma" for young school leavers of menial work and dead end jobs, and more elaborate training goals are warranted.

- Selection is a three-stage process. The first stage is one in which the motivations, knowledge and expectations of the applicants are assessed for suitability and less-suitable candidates eliminated. In the second stage the candidates are well-briefed on the wine industry and wine tasting, and the motivations and expectations of the short listed applicants are more carefully assessed, as part of which the candidates are required to produce an essay on their knowledge and aspirations. Final selections are made in the third stage. One participant withdrew voluntarily after the details of the occupation became clear.
- The course now also includes two children of wine farm employees who know the context very well. It has proven difficult to short list African applicants because the wine industry is not as familiar to them as it is for coloured applicants, but nonetheless there are two African trainees, one of them intending to specialise in wine-linked activities in the restaurant business.
- The course work in the training has also been expanded to include more financial, bookkeeping and entrepreneurial/management skills, for which a special outside lecturer has been contracted. A computer course might also be added. The latter could not be realised for this course but Bergzicht considers it a need in future training.
- Before each new section in the training curriculum, trainees are taken on excursions to wine farms so that they fully understand the situations for which they are being trained. Five excursions have already been organised. They have also received detailed briefings by wine-farm managers.
- BTC is so excited about the new venture that it will consider incorporating the course as a fixed option in the Centre programme from now on.
- The Bees Project Officer has spent a great deal of time in clarifying the contract with BTC. The contract includes the provision “**To develop sufficient networks in the tourism sector, resulting in the placement of all trainees for practical experience as well as final permanent placement**”. This is usefully comprehensive, although the words “resulting in” are in the passive mode and a more definite and should have been replaced by “and then to organise the placement....”, but apparently the Bees lawyer is satisfied with the wording.
- These aspects of the contract have been fully discussed with BTC, and hence although the course work has a while to run, the team has already started building networks in the wine industry to identify sound locations for practical training placements.
- No similar course is available at technical training facilities in the Boland. There is a related course offered at the Boland College, but this opportunity is not as accessible to poor students as the Bees/BTC/SSACI venture and is covered in three years. Hence the new

training course is an important addition to valuable skills training for disadvantaged youth in the region.

- Job opportunities in the field are not abundant, but the level of training, the types of skills covered and the wider exposure that the trainees get, suggest that the products will be more widely employable while waiting for the right opportunities.
- Opportunities for entrepreneurship are not yet very clear. Some business opportunities may exist in wine restaurant activity but for this the training would have to be broader still. On the recommendation of Swisscontact, the entrepreneurship aspect is likely to be delayed until it can be aligned to the plans of the local authority for transformation in the industry. At this stage the stance of the local authority is problematic – some people think that has a control agenda -- and very careful strategic positioning of entrepreneurship facilitation is required.
- Initial plans for the training of Tour Guides have been put on hold because, quite correctly, Bees is not certain that young school leavers from disadvantaged backgrounds will be able to find work. Tour guiding requires maturity, immense life skills and so much local and environmental-historical knowledge that any young school leavers would not be the first choice of employers.

It is noteworthy that the direction that the second phase of the project has taken a direction close to the conclusions to this evaluation offered in the next sections.

The shifts and adjustments in direction illustrate the benefits of trial exposure to development situations, which is what the first phase of this project was. The learning curve was steep but very valuable, justifying the initial decision to fund the project. It is a project that is now adding value and choice to young school leavers for whom choices for the future are highly limited.

## **8. SOME CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PROJECT**

This first phase project evaluation has been at a disadvantage mainly because the first cycle was intended as a learning process and a pilot. Given this, the evaluation should perhaps not be too rigorous. **But in order to be as useful as possible the conclusions that follow below will be written as if the first phase was intended to be simply an initial version of the final project.**

Nevertheless, one may conclude that the initiation phase was a very useful learning curve and that Bees, BTC and Radio KC have acquired some very valuable experience, and that this experience has been put to good effect.

Speaking for the first phase only, the following conclusions have to be drawn:

### **8.1 Did the project partners do what they said they were going to do?**

Given that the first phase was commenced early and the project coordinators, Bees, intended to use it as a pilot project or field test, the partners all did what was required of a first stage. It enabled lessons to be accumulated that, as we have pointed out, have been applied in the second stage currently underway.

The core tasks that the project concept set were performed, some well, and some less well (see 8.2) but nevertheless addressed. What was not done was the initiation of entrepreneurship facilitation, but given the drop-off in numbers of trainees and the placement problems, there was hardly scope for this.

### **8.2 Did the project partners conduct the tasks well?**

In this respect we have recorded some problems. Without repeating the detail above, the conclusions about the quality of project execution were the following:

- The selection process was somewhat limited and superficial and the expectations of trainee recruits were not fully addressed. While Bees thought that BTC would have applied the more elaborate concepts for the project initially discussed, because of staff discontinuity, by the time the selection started BTC approached the task as they would for one of their regular programmes. Suggestions for a two-stage selection process by Bees Project Officer Cyrus Ahalt, were not made forcefully enough.
- The training was well conducted as vocational training, with BTC maintaining their high standards, and to the satisfaction of the people with whom recruits were placed. Reviews of the performance of recruits were carried out. In terms of the concept of the project as a development model, however, Bees staff felt that the training should have been deepened. The curriculum elements of such deeper training were however not specified and agreed to in the haste of getting the first phase going.

- The placement of trainees was a rather untidy process and while BTC made efforts they had to be assisted by Radio KC. Prior networking and marketing of the project among employers in the hospitality sector was not as effective as it might have been. Here again it was as if the initial concept of the project was diluted by the time BTC was into the training phase. A large part of the problem lay with the Bees Project Officer who replaced Ahalt whose performance was less than mediocre. She was replaced after four months with the current very effective Project Officer but the damage had been done and the continuity of close coordination had been broken.
- A survey of Labour Needs and a literature review were conducted but the results were not documented and work shopped in a way that would have allowed the project to obtain maximum benefit. The survey results were not intended to be available before the first but they could have been more usefully digested in the latter stages of the first phase. Bees felt that the labour needs survey was not sufficiently useful to be work shopped, but however inadequate it was it and other inputs on demand for employment in the hospitality industry would have been excellent stimuli in a strategic workshop at some point in a project intended as a pilot. As a matter of fact all development projects aimed at employment creation should be very carefully assessed for the cost-effectiveness of the jobs to be created. It may very well be that a project will be useful for reasons other than numbers of jobs, but then such alternative objectives should be formalised as the project goals and clearly set out in the project manifestos or terms of reference.
- Some of the problems were due to ambiguous wording of a contract between Bees and BTC, but the divergence in the understanding of the project between Bees and BTC and the lack of a good coordinating Project Officer for a short but crucial time were more important than the contract wording.
- Radio KC did what it was supposed to do in promoting the project and we cannot assess whether there were quality problems or not.

### **8.3 Were the desired outputs realised?**

The output from the first phase is disappointing. Of the initial 15 recruits only nine received certificates and three found employment in the small-scale tourism sector. None were established as start-up entrepreneurs. As such the first phase was a very cost-ineffective exercise, but as emphasised, it was intended as a pilot project.

**A more important question is whether the desired development outputs would have been realised even if all 15 had been placed in employment in tourism.** Regrettably we feel not.

The project as conceptualised, within the realities of the labour market, was akin to using a sledgehammer to attack a flea. A careful analysis of the Labour Needs survey and the labour absorption capacity of the small scale hospitality sector, in the context of massive youth unemployment, all suggest that the project was aimed at a target that was far too restricted for a development modelling exercise.

The estimates of interviewees in the district involved in the tourism industry are that there may be around 100 formal and less formal small hospitality establishments in Paarl-Wellington. The survey suggests that they may have around 600 to 800 employees, but at most 60 to 80 of these employees are recruited outside of existing guesthouse networks, and certainly not every year. The open target labour market, which might offer no more than 30 to 40 vacancies per year for trained appointees, is therefore fairly trivial in its implications for employment creation.

**It would not be trivial, however, as a growth niche in the economy with significant downstream effects aside from job creation. But then the positions for which training is offered would have to be more salient for growth and more directly in interaction with the marketing impact of the tourism industry. Guesthouse employment, no matter how skilled, is rather too modest a target for a development initiative. New guesthouse enterprises would not be but as pointed out, this aspect of the project was not implemented.**

#### **8.4 What can SSACI and the project partners learn from the project?**

There is no need to repeat the detail of the lessons learned, many of which have already been incorporated into the second phase of the project as already described. The most important general lessons, however, are the following:

1. In all and any multi-faceted development projects the role of **constant and close coordination** is vital. It should not be suffocating to the point of destroying innovation and flexibility but there must be ongoing feedback and constant opportunities to correct problems -- in other words good project “intelligence”.

2. In most development projects one cannot be too careful in specifying the roles and tasks of the participants and partners, almost to the point of tedious detail. Equally important, however, is for these tasks to be available at all major project discussions to prevent what is called “role drift”. Broad and shared understandings of project goals may be sufficient in some projects but where a multiplicity of specific tasks have to be performed within a framework, then the framework must be revisited on a regular basis.
3. In development research in the pre-planning phases, one should never rely on what the respondents say and assume that this reflects reality. Results have to be **interpreted**. The old joke about survey research applies: one should never use survey research findings like a drunk uses a lamppost – for support instead of light.
4. Before the project execution starts, there must be a highly focussed workshop session in which the realistic outputs of the planned project, and their costs, are related to an equally realistic appraisal of the impact of the outcomes on a development problem. The results of such an exercise should be an important part of any project proposal. Many if not most development projects and programmes would not survive this kind of cost-impact analysis.
5. Pilot programmes are useful. In the current project the main partners, Bees and BTC, have used the lessons in the design of the second phase. As a consequence of the project and the intervention of Bees, the Bergzicht Training Centre has refined its training by adding wine tasting to its training capacity – a very useful addition.
6. More specifically, in an economy with very high unemployment it is common for all employment initiatives to be valued. But the very factors that create unemployment often ensure that the initiatives will not achieve their objectives. South Africa is wasting a lot of money on employment creation that is doomed to make no difference. One example is “labour-intensive development”. Our excess labour is too unproductive and expensive for many labour-intensive projects to be viable. Hence an employment project should always be aimed at developing a model that will be viable on a much wider basis, which means that it must be likely to be supported by the market on scale.

If this is doubtful it is far better to aim at either self-employment that can lead to small enterprises with the capacity to employ others, or to provide the training that will both respond to and stimulate growth initiatives in sectors and market niches. As initially conceptualised the pilot project being discussed fell short of viability in these terms. However, the second phase design could produce wage employment, albeit limited, but self-employment as well, and by injecting skills in a growth sector, it could stimulate more rapid growth of that sector within the local economy.

7. Hence the learning curve in the first phase of the project has produced a worthwhile development model being implemented in the second phase.
8. Broadening the training options to cover a wider range of positions in the tourism sector, hence offering wider career opportunities, could very usefully expand this model. A more varied range of small to medium customer-oriented tourism facilities could be covered and the course could also expand "upwards" to include some serious management training. This variety would introduce a kind of self-reinforcing presence for the previously disadvantaged youth group in the tourism industry.

In addition to the refinement of selection procedures to exclude inappropriately motivated candidates, the selection process could be aimed at the identification from the outset of two categories of entrants:

- Those aspiring to eventually become **managers and supervisors** of customer-oriented tourism facilities
- Those with the attributes to become **entrepreneurs** in the industry. Some of the people selected in this stream would inevitably discover that they are not entrepreneurial material but would have the option of returning to the "management" stream

As originally intended, those in the entrepreneurship stream should be assisted in business start-ups after completing the course and the practical training. Swisscontact will be a useful partner in this stream.

Finally, it is always difficult to relinquish the goal of job creation. The massive youth unemployment in the country, and in the district under discussion, imposes a moral obligation to be concerned to "create jobs". To be meaningful, however, job creation has to be on scale, and the nature of the tourism industry tends to rule this out. It is an industry full of tiny niches, vital for the economy, but structurally unable to generate employment on scale for significant numbers of people whose education makes them only marginally employable in a sector without routine mass employment. Even if the first phase of the project at hand had achieved the impossible and been fully successful, it would have subtracted a mere 15 people from a mass of several tens of thousands of unemployed youth. It is therefore strategically more important to assist in deepening the quality and viability of tourism and to provide routes of access into tourism niches for that minority of formerly disadvantaged youth with carefully established

potential for entrepreneurship or advancement as employees in the industry, than to try to alleviate a problem that only the economy at large and government can address on scale.

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