

Dual System Apprenticeship Pilot Project



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Overview

This project, mandated by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, is aimed at testing the suitability to South African industry of the “dual system” of apprentice training used in Switzerland, Germany and Austria. Given the chronic shortage of artisans in South Africa, it is hoped that the dual system may open another pathway to artisan qualifications.

The project is being implemented jointly by SSACI, MerSETA (a parastatal agency responsible for skills training in the manufacturing and engineering sectors) and the national Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Objectives

The principal objective of the proposed pilot project is to test the value of dual-system apprenticeships for South Africa, i.e. their practicality for local conditions, their effectiveness, their cost and their appeal to local employers.

Secondary objectives are to:

- promote closer interaction between public FET colleges and industry in the training of artisans
- develop systems for more flexible delivery of apprentice training courses by public FET colleges
- gather “real-time” information (i.e. while training is under way) on the relevance to industry of the courses that currently form the trade-theory component of apprenticeships
- encourage greater uptake of apprenticeships by small-to-medium sized enterprises

Strategy

Participating companies, grouped into clusters served by a public FET college, offer apprenticeships in selected engineering and metal-industry trades comprising three years of full-time, integrated training and work experience. The apprentices typically spend 2 days per week at college and the remaining 3 days in the company workshop.

SSACI manages the project, including the selection of employers, colleges and trainees, curriculum development, and monitoring and evaluation. MerSETA funds core training costs and assists with curriculum development and the assessment of learning outcomes. DHET provides additional funding for project management and support activities, and provides overall strategic direction through a steering committee comprising key stakeholders. Additional technical assistance is sourced from Swiss and German development agencies and academic institutions.

Progress to date

- Project management team in place
- Implementation plan developed for the life of the project (July 2012 – June 2016)
- First clusters of participating companies and colleges identified
- Development commenced on new training curricula based on both NATED (“N-courses”) and National Certificate (Vocational) programmes
- First intake of apprentices scheduled for January 2013