



Overview

This project addresses the call by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the provision of internships, i.e. temporary work experience combined with on-the-job learning, for college graduates.

Since January 2011 SSACI, with funding from the Elea Foundation for Ethics in Globalization in Switzerland, and in collaboration with the National Business Initiative, the Joint Education Trust and MERSETA, has been developing a model for on-going, large-scale implementation of internships within the national, public levy-grant system.

Objectives

The primary objective of this project is to open up new pathways for artisan training in the skills development system, drawing on the potential of SMEs as well as on systemic public funding.

Secondary objectives are to

- enhance the practical skills of NCV graduates through workplace experience so that they better meet the needs of employers
- increase the number of artisans in trades that are in demand by industry

Strategy

In March 2011, a pilot group of fifty graduates of engineering programmes in public FET colleges was enrolled as interns in seven companies, where they completed six months of work-integrated learning based on task-books developed by SSACI. The experiences of the interns and their host-employers were carefully monitored by an external research agency.

In July 2012, the project was 'mainstreamed' by linking the internships to MERSETA's well-established artisan apprenticeship scheme. Henceforth, interns will be enrolled in a 1-month institution-based practical skills training programme, followed by a 5-month internship in an engineering workshop. Thereafter, they will have the option of going into the open job market as technical assistants or artisan-aides, or completing a further 18 months' of accelerated apprenticeship training leading to the national trade test as artisans.

Outputs and Outcomes to Date

- The pilot group of fifty interns all completed their internships and were almost all employed
- New systems and mechanisms have been created to enable the provision of internships to be scaled up in future; these include standardized recruitment and selection procedures, SETA administrative processes and workplace learning programmes for interns
- Participating employers, including some who were initially sceptical, were unanimous about the usefulness, trainability and productivity of the interns, and have committed to taking on more in future, as well as to advocating internships to their business associates
- MERSETA committed to funding another 200 interns in 2012-13, feeding into its accelerated apprenticeship training programme