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Success for novel engineering training initiative

October 28, 2014 | Filed under: Business, Top News, | Posted by: Allan Williams
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OPENING up the world of industry to engineering students in Nelson Mandela Bay has proven to be a rewarding pilot project all round.



The innovative apprenticeship programme, that has been offered at Volkswagen Group South Africa's Uitenhage plant for almost a year to 16 Port Elizabeth College mechatronics students, is based on the Swiss and German dual system.

Here students spend as much time in the classroom as they do in the real world of high-volume production processes and machines.

Swiss ambassador Christian Meuwly visited the VWSA Technical Learning Academy yesterday.

The programme is offered in conjunction with MerSETA and a Johannesburg-based development agency, the Swiss-South African Cooperation Initiative (SSACI).

Meuwly said he was pleased at the positive learning environment created by the trainers.

"You should remember to make the best of the opportunity given to you," he said.

Julie-Ann Gerwel, 22, from Algoa Park, said the programme opened up a new world to her to have a better understanding of how industry worked.

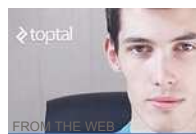
Although the on-the-job training sometimes required some heavy lifting, Gerwel said engineering had for a long time not been a job only for men. While Gerwel trains at VWSA, her fellow trainees, Nompumezo Gedze, 22, from Motherwell, and Noluvuyo Tyatya, 21, from Kwazakhele, are based at Johnson Controls.

They said they had learnt a lot since starting the apprenticeship in November last year.

Luwando Mqotha, 20, from Kwazakhele, is based at Continental Tyres South Africa (CTSA), and said he loved working with the artisans, finding solutions to problems and fixing machines in the factory.

The 16 students taking part in the pilot programme - 12 are based at VWSA, two at Johnson Controls and two at CTSA - will continue their dual learning until they graduate next year with their national certificate (vocational) in engineering studies. - Cindy Preller

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