



# SSACI Co-Operation SSACI News Update

## NEWSLETTER MISSION

The aim of this newsletter is to inform readers about what SSACI does and why. It presents information about our projects and highlights issues in education, training and skills development that affect SSACI's work. This newsletter is published electronically on our website and distributed via email. You are welcome to send it to other people who might be interested. If you would like to give us feedback please email us at: [info@ssaci.org.za](mailto:info@ssaci.org.za)

APRIL / MAY 2011

## +NEWS:

### SSACI steps up its support to the national skills training system

As part of our effort to improve the public vocational training system in South Africa, SSACI is increasing its support to the national Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). During 2011, we will facilitate partnerships between Further Education and Training (FET) colleges and local industries, with the aim of improving the alignment between the college curricula and the needs of industry. This initiative follows on from the work we did in 2010 when, at the request of the Director-General of DHET, we convened working groups of experts to advise the Minister on how to improve the public further education and training (FET) colleges in the short-to-medium term. The groups submitted their reports at the national FET Summit in October 2010.

The summit noted the need for closer relationships between colleges and industry. Ken Duncan, SSACI CEO, points out that SSACI has a wealth of knowledge to offer in this regard: "We have learned over the years that implementing workplace-based experience for college staff and students is a good way to foster meaningful, sustainable college-industry partnerships because they bring tangible benefits to both parties."

SSACI also has the resources to smooth the way. "We have good models for college-industry partnerships that are already being implemented in 24 public FET colleges. We have also developed staff training courses and materials that can be rolled out to all public colleges as resources permit," explains Ken.

### 2011 MILESTONES

- i. Between November 2010 and April 2011, research has been conducted into the range of relationships between colleges and industry in SA, identifying best practices and factors impeding or facilitating good partnerships.
- ii. January to December 2011: 6-month internships for engineering graduates from FET colleges are being implemented in a joint project with the National Business Initiative, Joint Education Trust and MerSETA to test the value of such internships as a stepping-stone to employment
- iii. June- August 2011: workshops on college-industry partnerships will be conducted around the country for prospective partners.
- iv. August–November 2011: colleges will receive Institution-specific assistance in developing partnerships with local companies.
- v. 30 November 2011: submission of a final report to DHET with recommendations on college-industry partnerships and WBE.



## DID YOU KNOW?

SSACI is helping 25 public FET colleges around the country to implement workplace-based experience for students within the National Curriculum (Vocational). Periods of workplace-based experiential learning for students and lecturers not only prepares the students better for the workplace but also improves the alignment between the colleges and industry.



# +OPINION EDITORIAL:

## The National Skills Development Strategy: Take #3

**In January 2011, government released its National Skills Development Strategy for the next five years. We ask whether this third strategy of its kind since 2001 will succeed where its predecessors were found wanting.**

With its vision of a skilled and capable workforce, its identification of eight pressing challenges and seven key transformational issues, and its seven strategic pillars for implementation, NSDS3 is indeed a document to gladden the heart of anyone interested in development. It reads like a call to action to all right-thinking citizens.

It is also terribly familiar. NSDS1 and NSDS2 said much the same in different words. But neither achieved their laudable goals. If they had, NSDS3 would have been unnecessary or, at least, could have been stated in one phrase: "Business as usual". The mere fact that NSDS3 begins with a criticism of its precursors - muted but unmistakable - tells us that they did not achieve their goals.

However much there may be to applaud in NSDS3, its success depends on whether or not these five key lessons about skills training on a national scale are taken on board.

### **1. The purpose of skills training is to produce skilled labour, not a utopian society.**

NSDS3 sees skills training as a solution to intractable social problems such as inequality, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, unjust discrimination, rural under-development and a great deal more. It might help. But, first and foremost, skills training needs to address the shortage of specific industrial skills. To solve that problem alone in the next five years would be an historic accomplishment. The more NSDS3 is encumbered with other laudable but distracting goals, the less likely it will be to accomplish its main objective of providing skills for the economy.

### **2. Skills training happens in industry, not in government.**

NSDS3 acknowledges this, but in a token way. A close reading suggests that industry should concentrate on training that government thinks is necessary rather than training that industry knows is necessary. The final version of the strategy is much the poorer for having diluted the role of industry. The April 2010 draft, for instance, required employers to sign off on sector skills plans. The final document gives an omnipotent planning role to the State.

### **3. Central planning doesn't work.**

The notion that central government can plan skills training for the economy at large has been abandoned internationally. At a recent seminar at the HSRC, the former CEO of the Learning & Skills Improvement Service, a parastatal agency responsible for quality improvement in further education and training institutions in the UK, explains why:

***"In the UK, we have given up centralised planning for colleges, especially with regard to courses and qualifications. We once had a desire to decide centrally on how many people to train in each field and at each college but we've given up because the labour market is so unpredictable and employers are so bad at describing what skills they actually need. It's much better just to let each college respond to the demands of students and local employers."***

Even public colleges become more effective when they are allowed to decide on their programme and qualifications mix; how much more should industry not be freed from prescriptive government requirements.

### **4. Think inside the box before thinking outside of it.**

There is a pressing need to fix the myriad inefficiencies within our existing public skills training system before we invent a whole new one. NSDS3 actually calls for such repair work but offers no guidance on how to do it, nor any rewards for those who try. SSACI's experience has been that there is little appetite amongst government officials for the wearisome and unglamorous task of fixing dysfunctional systems, programmes and institutions. This is a tragedy because SA has all the ingredients - the money, the regulatory framework, the institutions and the infrastructure - to do all the training it needs, and do it well. But we lack focused leadership and a willingness to 'take names and kick butt' when people and agencies don't perform.

### **5. Government policies must be in harmony.**

There is a real danger that the incentives to train and the mechanisms for doing so that are proposed by NSDS3 will be torpedoed by contradictory policies of other government departments. For instance, it is self-evident that the greatest stimulus to training is a growing economy with its concomitant rising demand for skilled labour. Yet some of the government's labour-market policies seem designed to limit that demand. The DTI's BEE scorecard, potentially a huge driver of skills training, relegates training to a minor position and imposes encumbrances and restrictions on companies that wish to train beyond their own immediate needs. NSDS3 will have to find ways of mitigating and working around these counter-productive policies.

“Strategy” is a military term and military commanders spend more time thinking about strategy than most other people. So the words of Field Marshal Sir John Dill, Chief of Britain’s Imperial General Staff in World War 2 and a major contributor to the Allies’ war-winning strategy, are worth thinking about:

***“In war, there is seldom any shortage of promising ideas.  
The difficulty is to make them work.”***

The same is true of NSDS3.

## **+Announcement:** **Calling 5 000 SSACI alumni to join the club**

**More than 5 000 young people have been touched by SSACI funding and interventions over the past decade. In addition, between 2001 and 2011:**

- + We have mobilised over R100 million for skills development.
- + More than 5 000 previously-unemployed young people have enrolled for technical or vocational training
- + Over 90% have graduated on schedule and 80% have been placed in skilled jobs.
- + 370 new enterprises have started up.
- + 650 existing enterprises have received or are still receiving business-development services.

Success breeds success and we want to help all our alumni to keep building on their successes and make the numbers talk even louder. For this reason, SSACI is excited to announce the launch of our alumni club: iGrow. The main aim of the club is to facilitate further personal and professional growth opportunities for the youngsters we have trained. The forum will also allow our young professionals to share their experiences and requests with each other.

### **Topics that will be discussed on iGrow include:**

- + Finding a job
- + Keeping your job
- + Belonging to a professional association
- + Managing a mentoring relationship
- + Walking the extra mile in your career
- + Life-long learning
- + Training opportunities
- + Giving back to society
- + Reading as a business advantage
- + Winning awards
- + Negotiating an increase
- + Self-employed vs. entrepreneur



### **Who can join?**

Anybody who has been trained by SSACI, our community partners and our service providers.

### **What does it cost?**

R100 per year, but during April and May 2011 members can join for free.

### **What are the benefits?**

- + The monthly iGrow Stepping Up newsletter that shares tips and opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- + Regular SMS reminders
- + Lively discussions and mutual support on Facebook.
- + The opportunity to enter the annual Alumnus of the Year competition.

### **How can people join?**

**Send an email to [info@igrow.org.za](mailto:info@igrow.org.za) or call 012 6673970**

## +SUCCESS:

### Pilot programme proves our point

During 2010, SACCI ran a pilot project with two groups of colleges to place National Certificate (Vocational) students for workplace-based experiential (WBE) learning. The results show that although much work remains to be done, college-industry partnerships are a winning recipe.

The SSACI WBE pilot programme had 4 distinct objectives:

1. Improve learners' ability to engage with their studies
2. Improve learners' readiness for the workplace
3. Lecturers undertake WBE and use it to prepare learners better for the workplace
4. Establish and maintain partnerships between colleges and workplaces.

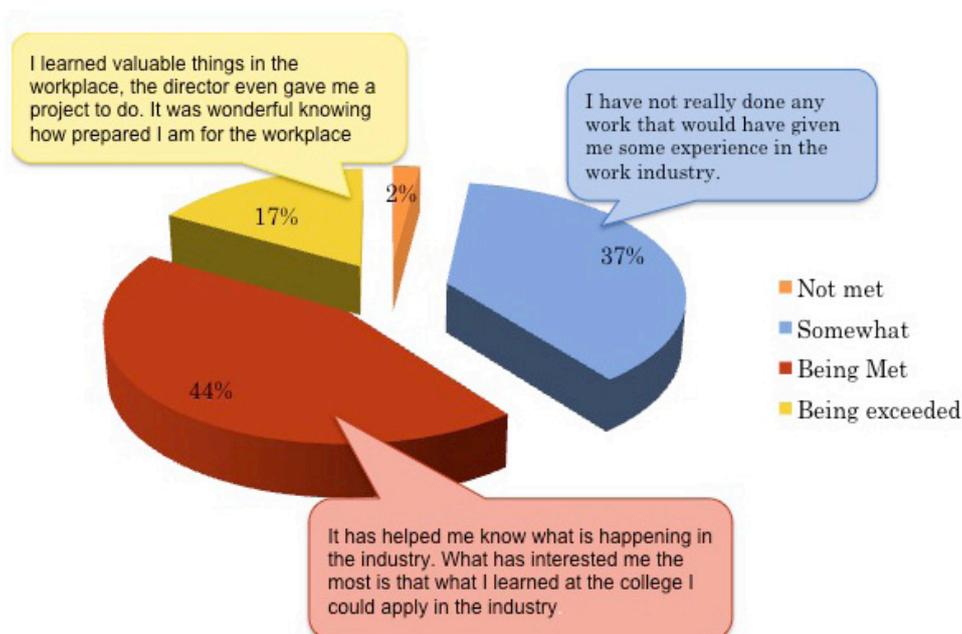
At its conclusion, SSACI surveyed students, lecturers and employers to determine the success of the programme. More than 60% of students said the programme either met or exceeded their expectations, while 86% of lecturers felt that the project had improved relationships with industry.

Students, lecturers and employers alike agreed that the programme had a positive impact on students' ability to learn and to prepare themselves for the workplace. There were also encouraging signs that WBE could be an effective way to build relationships between college and industry. Some employers, for instance, cited BEE and staff recruitment benefits as incentives to continue with WBE, while other felt it offered them a way to contribute to society.

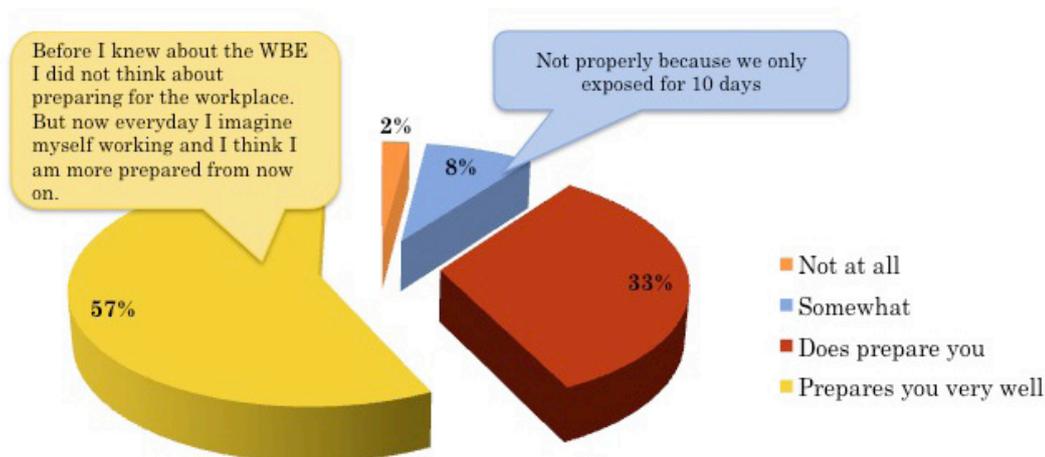
WBE for lecturers, however, proved to be more of a challenge. Lecturers often lacked time during term to spend at companies, were far less willing than students to use their holidays for WBE and, in some cases, were concerned that a spell on the factory floor might expose their shortcomings. However, none of these challenges are insurmountable and SSACI is continuing to expand the WBE programme within participating colleges, as well as extending it to more colleges and employers during 2011.

**“Before I knew about the WBE I did not think about preparing for the workplace.  
But now every day I imagine myself working.”**

### Students responses: Were their expectations met?



## 90% Of students thought that the WBE had prepared them *well or very well* for the workplace



**“It has helped me know what is happening in the industry. What has interested me the most is that what I learned at the college I could apply in the industry.”**

### **+PARTNER:** Pick of the crop

During February, Credit Suisse was named the best private bank in the world for the second consecutive year by Euromoney magazine. SSACI is extremely proud to count such a market leader among its skills development partners in South Africa.

Credit Suisse is a world-leading financial services company with a proud history spanning more than 150 years.

One of SSACI's valuable partners, Credit Suisse supports a range of philanthropic initiatives across Europe, Middle East and Africa. The company partners with charities through direct financial donations as well as contributions of time and professional skills. SSACI benefits from Credit Suisse's belief that by forming long-term partnerships with a select group of charities the company can make a meaningful impact in the community. Credit Suisse concentrates much of its grant-making on organisations working to bridge the gap from education to employment, which makes it a perfect partner for SSACI.



### Development Support

For more information about SSACI visit our website [www.ssaci.org.za](http://www.ssaci.org.za)  
or phone 011 6422110