



SSACI NEWS

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This newsletter aims to keep SSACI's partners informed about what the Initiative is doing, and why. It seeks to give sponsors and project-holders a better understanding of one another's perspectives. It highlights issues in the fields of education, training and skills development that affect SSACI's work.

"SSACI News" is issued from the desk of the CEO

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Learning the Right Lessons

In September 2009, SSACI published a booklet entitled "**Training South African Youths for Employment: Lessons from SSACI's Experience**". As the name suggests, this booklet summarises the lessons we have learned from over eight years of practical experience in training young people for employment.

The origins of the booklet go back to November 2008, when SSACI commissioned independent researchers to conduct a review of our technical and vocational skills training programme (see separate article, "**Evidence of Success**").

From a review of the international research literature and reflection on eight years of practical experience, SSACI has identified the following elements as being essential to the success of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) aimed at out-of-school youths:

- Ongoing research into where work opportunities suitable for young people are to be found, and training aimed specifically at providing access to those opportunities
- Rigorous selection of trainees, informed by a sound understanding of the required entry criteria, desired outcome-competences and the normal capabilities of the target population
- An equally rigorous selection of training service-providers on the basis of their track record in training youths for employment and their readiness to reflect upon and modify their curriculum and mode of delivery in the light of research and experience



Students from Umfolozi FET College get some grimy work experience at the Bell Plant in Richards Bay as part of the joint SSACI-DoE college project

- A curriculum that develops the technical and life skills necessary to get and retain employment in the target industry, to provide a foundation for future learning, self-development and career advancement
- A period of structured and supported practical experience in an authentic workplace
- A level of academic and personal support for trainees that strikes a reasonable balance between comprehensiveness and affordability
- Extension of the trainees' social networks to bring them into contact with, and attune them to the culture of, prospective employers
- Assistance in identifying employment opportunities and preparing for the employers' selection processes
- Establishment of strong, mutually-beneficial partnerships between training providers, industry and other agencies and stakeholders that can add value to the programme
- Internal evaluation processes that promote ongoing reflection and continuous improvement of the programme

The SSACI booklet analyses these lessons in detail and shows how they can be implemented in practice.

On reading the booklet, Professor Michael Savage, former Executive Director of the Open Society Foundation and long-time development guru, wrote to SSACI that:

"It is one of the most sensible, practical and clearly expressed series of lessons drawn from practical experience in the field that I have read. I congratulate all involved in it. It should be compulsory reading for anyone involved in the area of skills training for youth employment. It contains very sensible, practical pointers about how best to deliver effective skills training."

SSACI TRUSTEES VISIT FUNDI TRAINING CENTRE

SSACI trustees took time out of their normal schedules to visit one of SSACI's flagship projects and meet some of the trainees. At the Fundi Training Centre on the East Rand, artisan apprentices are undergoing an accelerated training programme sponsored by SSACI that is aimed at revitalizing the country's long-neglected apprenticeship system. Mr Desmond Uithaler, the training manager at Fundi, showed the visitors where boilermakers, fitters-and-turners, instrument-technicians and electricians were being trained under the SSACI scheme. The trustees also met with some of the SSACI-sponsored trainees.



L-R:: Desmond Uithaler, SSACI trainees, Ms Nthabiseng Dube (trustee), Ambassador Rudolf Baerfuss (trustee), Ken Duncan (SSACI CEO)

WATCH THIS SPACE: WHICH SSACI ARTISAN WILL GO TO SWITZERLAND IN 2010?

Thanks to contributions-in-kind from Bühler, Swiss International Air Lines and Tourism Switzerland, the top graduate from SSACI's Accelerated Artisan Training Programme will be going to Switzerland for four weeks early in 2010 for further training and work-experience at Bühler's plant in Uzwil. Although the main purpose of the trip is to sharpen the prize-winner's newly-acquired technical skills, he/she will also be shown some of Switzerland's many tourist attractions.



Evidence of Success

Between November 2008 and June 2009, SSACI's programme of technical and vocational skills was analysed and evaluated by external researchers commissioned by SSACI "to tell us how we're doing."

The research methodology involved:

- a tracer study of former trainees chosen at random from past and present training projects
- focus-group interviews with trainees from current projects
- interviews with training providers in current projects
- interviews with current employers of SSACI graduates
- visits to training courses

The researchers also conducted a review of local and international research literature to establish what is already known about skills training for employment and the extent to which SSACI has incorporated that knowledge into its own activities.

In their report, the researchers stated that SSACI's skills training programme is characterised by:

- **Effective outreach to unskilled, unemployed, youths from disadvantaged backgrounds:**

"SSACI is reaching the target population it is mandated to work with"

- **High levels of satisfaction with the quality of the programme amongst trainees and employers:**

"98% of the learners rated the quality of classroom teaching as good or very good... 78% of the learners stated that they have been given good opportunity to practice new skills... Critically, 80% of the employers interviewed viewed the preparedness of trainees to enter the workplace as 'above average' or 'excellent'... Further, 74% of employers stated that the life-skills of the graduates were of an 'above average' or 'excellent' level."



Umfolazi FET College learner getting work experience



Bongani Nkutha, artisan in training

- **Good access to opportunities to practise newly-acquired technical skills** through internships and workplace-based training:

"The value of ensuring linkages between institutional learning, practical training and the workplace is clearly demonstrated in the [training] case studies."
- **Good preparation for the world of work:**

"77% of graduates reported that the work opportunity that they have accessed is related to the qualification that they attained through the programme supported by SSACI. Learners spoke enthusiastically about the extent to which they were able to utilise their technical skills in the workplace... It was found that the majority of [trainees now in jobs] are able to apply their skills as a central component of their occupations, and that even those who do not work in areas directly related to their training are finding ways to utilise their skills... Of even more import is that 80% of the employers interviewed stated that the preparedness of graduates to enter the workplace was 'above average' or 'excellent' "
- **Development of social networks that give access to employment opportunities:**

"Students supported by SSACI are unlikely to have the type of social network emphasised by the research literature as being critical for accessing employment. Yet the programmes appear to have successfully focused on the development of such networks for the students... In addition, many of the employer interviews reflect on the fact that the placements provided them with an opportunity to determine whether there was a fit between their needs and the competence and attitude of the learners. A number of employers indicated that they had selected the individual for employment based on this experience. This again emphasises the importance of the placements for creating networks for the learner."
- **High levels of job placement, on completion of training, in employment related to the graduates' newly acquired skills:**

"It appears that these jobs are quality jobs and that the majority relate directly to the qualifications completed though the SSACI programme. "

The researchers concluded that SSACI's practice is comparable with the best anywhere and worthy of being fed into national programmes.

Joint SSACI-DHET Colleges Project

In 2007, SSACI initiated a three-year project in collaboration with the national Department of Education (now the Department of Higher Education and Training) aimed at aligning the National Curriculum (Vocational) more closely with the needs of industry and at helping colleges forge more effective partnerships with local companies. Key elements of the project are the in-service development of college lecturers and workplace-based practical experience for students.

To date:

- All participating colleges have increased the number and quality of their partnerships with nearby companies; some colleges have initiated such relationships for the first time
- The capacity of the colleges to initiate and manage workplace experience for their students has been significantly enhanced
- A “how-to” manual on implementing workplace-based experience for students has been developed and will be adopted by more colleges in 2010
- Some of the colleges have received donations of up-to-date workshop equipment from local companies, e.g. Bell Equipment in Richards Bay donated CNC machines worth millions of Rands to Umfolozi college
- Several companies now employ students from nearby colleges during the end-of-year shut-down period to assist with maintenance on their machinery
- Companies have also ear-marked students for employment on completion of their studies at the end of 2010
- Some companies, including ABB and Bühler, are exploring the possibilities of opening their in-house training programmes to college lecturers



Part of Umfolozi College workshop, with CNC Machines donated by Bell

TRUE GRIT

This article by Janet Lopes appeared in the September edition of "SEIFSA NEWS", the magazine of the Steel and Engineering Industries' Federation of South Africa.

From time to time one meets an individual with such sheer determination and will to succeed that you feel quite overwhelmed.

One such person is Lloyd Mashego who has recently completed his 24 week institutional training period at SEIFSA's Fundi Training Centre in Benoni.

Lloyd grew up as one of three children in the family raised by a mother in the Bushbuckridge area in dire poverty. When he was a child, his uncle, a miner, spent a great deal of time telling stories of his difficult life on the mines and stressing the fact that education was the key to escaping the trap of rural poverty and unemployment.

On passing matric with commercial subjects in 2003, Lloyd took his first step to freedom by registering with the Further Education and Training College in Witbank where he had to start at the very beginning with the introductory course, followed by N1 then N2 then N3 in the mechanical field. Unable to secure an apprenticeship, he found a position as an operator at a Witbank company and began to acquire skills in the boilermaking field. After two years with the company, he faced unemployment as his contract was terminated.

After a brief period of despair, Lloyd applied through SEIFSA for a position as a trainee at Fundi Training Centre and completed the rigorous recruitment and selection tests successfully.

He was selected as a trainee funded by the Swiss South African Co-operation Initiative (SSACI) and started his institutional training with a SSACI stipend. SSACI is a South African development finance scheme funded by Swiss and South African companies in collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation. It is a unique public-private partnership between a government agency and private sector corporations aimed at promoting the social and economic development of the South African youth.

Life still presented challenges however as Lloyd did not have the funds to rent a room in Benoni so had to travel every day from Witbank to Benoni to reach the Centre by the starting time of seven o'clock in the morning. When asked how he managed this, his response is rueful. "My shack was near the freeway. For the first month at Fundi I would get up at four every morning and hit the freeway to hitch a ride to Benoni. Some truck drivers were very kind to me and would pick me up without hesitation. Basically, I would get out of bed in the morning and start running. The same story to get back to Witbank in the evening after training." He is proud of the fact he was hardly ever more than a few minutes late at Fundi.

Seeing Lloyd's unwavering determination to succeed against all odds, the manager of Fundi gave Lloyd a loan so that he could rent a room in Benoni near the center for the rest of his institutional training period. He made excellent progress during his training and his final diligence evaluation was a score of 4—excellent progress. He has now been indentured as an apprentice by GEA Cooling Systems in Germiston and will undertake his trade test in about a year's time.

Asked about his hobbies and spare time activities, Lloyd is modest. "Saturday is laundry day with perhaps an occasional trip to the mall. Sunday I spent most of the day in church. I have an enormous amount to be grateful for." He is clear about his future when he stresses the fact that the crucial career path for a young person to consider is a technical career in a scarce skills trade such as boilermaking. "With courage and determination, the sky is the limit. The country needs people like me to make a contribution to our future."

Asked to comment on Lloyd's progress, his instructor at Fundi, Thato Methola, is outspoken in his praise for the youngster's enthusiasm for his trade. "He looks so calm and laid back, that you don't realise at first how passionate he is about his work. His theoretical understanding is excellent and once he starts a job there is just no stopping him. He has absolute spark. He will really go a long way in the future, I have no doubts."

When one chats to Lloyd, one cannot help thinking of the miner in Bushbuckridge who planted the seed of hope and perseverance in a child and one regrets that he is not here today to share the family's pride in Lloyd's achievements.



Youth Employment: Two Steps Forward, Two Steps Back?

A widely-publicised consequence of the current recession has been the widespread loss of jobs. In just the third quarter of 2009, the economy shed 485'000 jobs, leaving one out every 15 workers unemployed. Less well known is that young workers have been hit disproportionately hard. Youths aged 16 to 24 have an ongoing unemployment rate of 48% - double that of the population at large - and lost 15% of their employment opportunities in the past year as opposed to 7.5% for the entire labour force.

There are two main drivers of unemployment amongst South African youths:

1. The supply of jobs is not keeping pace with the demand.
2. Most young South Africans lack marketable skills.

These problems are not unique to South Africa, but they are more acute here. Young people everywhere find it harder to get and keep jobs because:

- They have fewer technical skills and less work experience than older people, which makes them less attractive to prospective employers
- Their social and linguistic skills are less developed, especially in unfamiliar situations like job interviews and assessments
- They are less experienced at all aspects of job-hunting
- They have fewer business contacts and social relationships that can be put to use in finding employment opportunities
- As newcomers, they are the first to go when retrenchments are made on the "last-in-first-out" principle
- As lower earners, they are also cheaper to retrench

According to research published earlier this year by the Further Education & Training Institute at the University of the Western Cape, 2.8 million out of a total of 6.7 million South Africans aged 18-24 are neither employed nor receiving any education or training. These NEETs, as they are sometimes called ("Neither in Employment, Education or Training"), are a potentially explosive force in public life, as seen from their prominence in recent violent service-delivery protests around the country.



Lucky few? Students from South West FET College with Marcel Brühwiler, CEO of Bühler, while on workplace experience

List of Current SSACI Projects

Accelerated Artisan Skills	
Description	Revitalisation of apprenticeships in critically scarce artisan trades (millwrights, fitters & turners, boilermakers, electricians and welders) through an intensive 80-week training programme leading to the nationally accredited trade test
Duration	3 years (2008-10)
Lead Agency	SSACI
Budget	R2'000'000
Status	40 apprentices currently in training; negotiations under way with government agencies to scale up project in 2010
Access to College Technical Training	
Description	Scholarships, mentorship and assistance with job-placement for 160 students studying engineering or financial accounting courses at FET institutions in the Western Cape
Duration	7 years, 2003-10
Lead Agency	Access Trust
Budget	R3'500'000
Status	On track for completion in June 2010
Avitourism	
Description	Creation of employment opportunities in tour-guiding for bird enthusiasts through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of 20 youths from rural districts in Limpopo Province as birding guides, followed by placement in employment in wilderness lodges or camps • Refurbishment and upgrading of community-owned campsites on wilderness trails
Duration	2 years, 2008-9
Lead Agency	Birdlife Southern Africa
Budget	R990'000
Status	Behind schedule: now due for completion in February 2010
Community ECD Services	
Description	Expansion of employment opportunities in early childhood development (ECD) through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of 50 young women as new ECD practitioners through a ten-month training programme leading to a nationally-recognised qualification, and thereafter assisting them to find employment in ECD centres in disadvantaged communities within the greater Cape Town metropolitan area • Training in managerial, educational, financial and health-and-safety issues for 300 community members responsible for 5 community-based ECD centres and 40 satellite sites • Promotion of long-term sustainability of the centres and sites by helping them with financial planning and access to government subsidies
Duration	2½ years, 2007-9
Lead Agency	Centre for Early Childhood Development
Budget	R2'700'000
Status	Implementation completed; lessons from external evaluations being disseminated through stakeholder workshops
FET College Training	
Description	Assisting public Further Education & Training colleges to align their training in engineering more closely with the needs of industry through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in-service development of lecturers • workplace-based experience for students • development of local college-industry partnerships
Duration	3 years, 2008-10
Lead Agency	SSACI, in partnership with Department of Education
Budget	R2'500'000
Status	On track through 7 lead colleges, with systemic lessons being passed on to provincial and national education structures.

Hospitality Skills for 2010

Description	Skills training of 300 youths for the hospitality industry, leading up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament, and assistance with job placement.
Duration	2½ years, 2008-10
Lead Agency	Hospitality Youth Initiative
Budget	R3'500'000
Status	On track for completion in July 2010

Human Resources for Rural Health

Description	Simultaneously address the shortage of qualified professional health staff in rural hospitals and the high incidence of unemployment in deep rural areas through: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• training for 100 rural youths in the critically scarce health professions (medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, optometry & physiotherapy) and placement back into local hospitals and clinics to serve for a period equal to the duration of their studies• Integration of the training programme into publically-funded scholarship schemes
Duration	9 years, 2002-11
Lead Agencies	Friends of Mosvold Scholarship Scheme; Wits Initiative for Rural Health Education
Budget	R10'500'000
Status	18 graduates to date, with another 72 in training; scheme adopted by North West provincial government

Innovative Enterprise Development

Description	Training, mentorship and business loans for 180 emerging young entrepreneurs with innovative businesses in Cape Town to help them grow their businesses and create more jobs.
Duration	7 years, 2003-9
Lead Agency	The Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship, University of Cape Town
Budget	R1'680'000
Status	120 businesses serviced, with 70% reporting increased revenue and profitability, and creation of 80 new jobs

Research into Promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship

Description	Applied research into: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• effectiveness of different approaches to developing youth-owned enterprises• mentoring young entrepreneurs• aspects of small business development in SA
Duration	5 years, 2006-10
Lead Agencies	SSACI; Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Budget	R1'600'000
Status	3 research reports published to date, with 2 more scheduled for publication in early 2010 and 2011

Stellemploy Artisan Training

Description	Establishment of a skills training centre in Stellenbosch and training for 390 local youths in basic artisanal skills, followed by placement in the construction and light engineering industries
Duration	2½ years, July 2007– Dec 2009
Lead Agency	Stellemploy
Budget	R1'400'000
Status	On track for completion in Dec 2009