

August 2010

## *Newsletter Mission*

This newsletter aims to inform about what we are doing and why. It presents information about our projects and highlights issues in education, training and skills development that affect SSACI's work.

This newsletter will be published electronically on our website and shared via email with our stakeholders. You are welcome to send it to like-minded individuals with an interest. If you would like to subscribe or give us feedback please send an email to [info@ssaci.org.za](mailto:info@ssaci.org.za)

## ► **News: SSACI provides system support**

In support of an intensive drive by the national Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to revitalize South Africa's Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, SSACI is leading a process that will inform future policies and programmes for this major component of the country's skills development system.

Created in 2002 from mergers of 152 technical colleges, SA's 50 multi-campus FET colleges (equivalent of the Swiss *berufsschule*) have struggled to deliver on their mandate of supplying technically and vocationally skilled young people to the country's economy. Despite massive injections of funds from central government, the effectiveness of the colleges has been limited by numerous problems in their organisation and curricula.

Since 2008, SSACI has been assisting public FET colleges to improve their training in engineering skills through:

- in-service development of lecturers
- workplace-based experience for students
- development of local college-industry partnerships

Currently, 10 colleges participate in this joint SSACI/DHET project and 15 more will join in 2011.

In April this year, Minister Blade Nzimande of the DHET convened a round-table stakeholders' conference to consider how to address inadequacies in the college sector. The conference led to a request to SSACI from DHET's Director-General, Prof Mary Metcalfe, to manage five "Task Teams" of stakeholders and experts, charged with developing policy recommendations and an action plan on college improvement for the DHET. The Task Teams' proposals must include immediate steps for stabilizing and strengthening the college sector, and recommendations for longer-term policies and systems. Their consolidated report will be presented at an all-stakeholder "FET Summit" to be hosted by the DHET on 2-3 September.



*FET students get work experience as part of SSACI's joint project with DHET*

SSACI is leading and funding the work of the five Task Teams, whose focal areas are:

1. Policy, legislation and governance
2. Curricula and learning programmes
3. Funding and planning
4. Examinations
5. Operational support for colleges

SSACI personnel serve on all but one of these Task Teams (i.e. *Examinations*, to which SSACI staff felt they could contribute least). Interim reports from the Task Teams are reviewed by a Technical Working Committee and a Steering Committee, which also comprise experts and stakeholders, and whose brief is to act as sounding boards, providing critical feedback and fresh perspectives.

In a parallel process, SSACI is also assisting the DHET with a review of legislation governing Employment and Skills Development Agencies (ESDAs), a mechanism set up by the Department of Labour in 2007 to promote occupational training and job-placement of unskilled, unemployed youths. However, ESDAs have not lived up to expectations and DHET, which now has oversight of them, is giving the system a major overhaul. SSACI's CEO, Ken Duncan, serves on a three-person advisory committee that is informing this process, which is due to be completed in February 2011.

The cost to SSACI of the FET Task Team and ESDA initiatives is R2.5-million. Another R3.5-million has been budgeted by SSACI for the joint SSACI-DHET College engineering skills project. Together, these interventions are an excellent opportunity for SSACI feed some of its knowledge and experience into the national skills-training system and thus benefit the country as a whole for a long time to come.



## *Success:* “Hospitality Skills for 2010” Project

In the run-up to the FIFA 2010 World Cup, SSACI partnered with a Grahamstown-based NGO, the Hospitality Youth Initiative, to provide entry-level training for young people seeking careers in the hospitality industry. In this “Hospitality Skills for 2010” Project, a total of 300 young people from tournament host-cities were enrolled for a four-month training course, including a three-month supervised internship in a tournament city hotel. By the time Spain walked off with the trophy on 11 July, 199 (66%) of the project trainees were employed and walking off with well-earned monthly pay-cheques. Some of the early training graduates have already been promoted to supervisory positions.

This project has just been evaluated by independent researchers, who contrasted its high success rate in terms of trainees finding employment to that of training funded by the parastatal Sector Education and Training Authority for the tourism and hospitality industry. That body reports a disappointing 20% employment rate for graduates of its training programmes. The evaluators were especially impressed that the SSACI project had achieved its positive results in the midst of a severe economic recession that cost the country as a whole almost a million jobs – two-thirds of which were occupied by youths – in just one year. They also noted, however, that 74 (25%) of the SSACI trainees took jobs before completing the full training programme – not necessarily a bad thing, but not ideal either.

Amongst the factors contributing to the success of the training were:

- it's high credibility with industry
- bringing trainees and potential employers together through internships
- the inclusion of life-skills especially relevant to a service-industry, such as good communication, handling pressure and dealing with difficult people

This project has opened up a new pathway to sustainable employment for many disadvantaged youths and is addressing the shortage of new entrants into the industry (See “*Are we Nearly There Yet?*” below).

*Interns in SSACI's Hospitality Skills for 2010" project get a taste of what it's all about*



## *Issue:* Are we nearly there yet?

The French call it *déjà vu* – that sense of being familiar with something you are looking at for the first time. Anyone involved with the tourism industry in South Africa is bound to have that sensation on reading the Department of Tourism's recently-released *National Tourism Sector Strategy 2010-2015*. The product of extensive consultations in 2009 with stakeholders in the local tourism and hospitality industry, it identifies six key objectives to be addressed over the next five years, one of which is the development of the people who staff the industry. The *Strategy* calls for the implementation of a comprehensive human resource development programme aimed at attracting and retaining high-quality people.

That's good stuff – but it is not new. In fact, it's been around since 2004, when the then Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism teamed up with South African Tourism and the Department of Trade & Industry to conduct groundbreaking research into factors promoting or inhibiting tourism in South Africa. A widespread lack of training and human resource development was identified as a critical issue, which was then analysed in more detail in follow-up research conducted in 2004-5. This in turn led to a *Master Plan for Tourism Growth 2005-10*, which emphasised the importance of skills training to the future success of the industry.

Evidently, the requisite skills training did not happen. The HSRC's *Human Resource Development Review 2008* contains a chapter entitled "The Growing Skills Shortage in the Tourism Sector", in which the following research findings are reported:

- There is a chronic shortage of middle management and supervisory staff in the hospitality industry, caused mainly by a failure to retain and develop junior staff
- There is no systematic approach to skills development in the industry
- Since skills are mostly thought of in terms of personality types and experience, promotion usually depends more on the goodwill of one's immediate superior than on one's competence or qualifications
- THETA, the Sector Education and Training Authority for the tourism and hospitality industry, has been hampered by 'challenges to its governance and legitimacy' and has little credibility within the industry.

None of this suggests that the worthy plans drawn up in 2004 were effectively implemented. SSACI's "Hospitality Skills for 2010" Project

But the *National Tourism Sector Strategy 2010-2015* contains "Problem Statements" and proposed solutions that are commendably clear and unequivocal. For example, regarding people development the *Strategy* states: "Currently the industry does not attract or retain quality people at all skills levels. This is hampered by poor training and development. THETA is largely ineffective and does not assist the industry as best they could in the development of people." The first proposed response to this situation is to "Improve THETA's effectiveness". **Everyone connected to the industry will certainly agree with that.**

## *It'll Be Our Secret*

SSACI prides itself on being a learning organization, ready to share its experience with others. During the remainder of 2010 we will share some “trade secrets” about development work with special partners we have three things in common with: a passion for development, a desire of tangible results and a pursuit of best practice in our profession. Each month, SSACI will deliver to the selected partners a “trade secret gift” that includes practical tools to enhance their social development programmes. A brief overview of the tools will appear in this newsletter.

This month's trade secret comes in a form of a pocket guide entitled “*Working with a Community Partner*”. Its pages include tested, practical advice on: ‘What to look for in a prospective partner’, ‘What documents to ask for’, ‘Ominous signs to watch out for in a funding proposal’, ‘How to get the best out of your partners’, and ‘Steps to take when your partner or project is in trouble.

If you would like more information about becoming a SSACI partner and sharing in our trade secrets, please email a request to [Ken Duncan](#).

## *Partner Introduction:* **City Lodge Group**



Driven by the vision of its founder, Swiss-born Hans Enderli, City Lodge Group (comprising the City Lodge, Town Lodge and Road Lodge brands) has become one of South Africa's leading hotel chains.

City lodge is also a key partner in SSACI's hospitality skills training programme, providing internships for 150 of the trainees, and employing 53 of them afterwards.

Impressed with the work being done by SSACI, City Lodge started sponsoring us in 2010. For more information on City Lodge, visit [www.citylodge.co.za](http://www.citylodge.co.za)

SSACI presents partnership opportunities in many different manners. Contact us for our sponsorship and partner brochure.

## **Development Support**

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