

issue 8 june 2010

# Achieve

*LEADERS IN CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP*

national conference  
**ups ante in skills  
development**

**merSETA western cape  
& freestate champion  
skills revolution**



**merSETA**  
MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA  
ISO 9001:2008

# Achieve



**merSETA**

MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA

## *VISION*

leaders in closing the skills gap.

## *MISSION*

to facilitate sustainable development of skills,  
transformation and accelerate growth in  
manufacturing, engineering and related services.

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Client Relations Manager (Free State), Gerhard Slabbert & Client Relations Manager (Western Cape), Bronwin Abrahams.

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Achieve issue 8 June 2010

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# talkingnotes

*The euphoria that has engulfed South Africa since we were named the hosts of the world's biggest showpiece is amazing. This event will go down as the best-ever world cup in the history of FIFA and the world at large. I say this with absolute conviction.*

**I**n this vein, I take this opportunity to wish Bafana Bafana well for the tournament, not forgetting our brother African nations of Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Algeria. We believe in you and you can rest assured of our unwavering support. It would be extremely gratifying to have at least one African team going all the way to the finals. This is not wishful thinking - we have what it takes to silence the critics.

June is "Youth Month" and we have selected as a theme the adage: "merSETA, a catalyst for skills development". In this edition, we reflect on what we have done and achieved in the past 10 years by going down memory lane.

I urge you to read these thought provoking pieces and find out how merSETA has and is changing the lives of South Africans.

Last month, we hosted our second National Conference at Emperors Palace in Johannesburg under the theme "Forging the Future". This is where the captains and titans of industry had a meeting of the minds and shared their thoughts on paving the way forward in taking skills development to another level. The conference was a huge success and we are convinced that its findings will bear fruit in the future.

We ran our conference along with the merSETA Career Choice Day, and I am glad to report that the career choice portion of the conference was also a great success. Our sincere gratitude to all learners, educators and to our partners who exhibited on the day. Your patriotic patronage is much appreciated in helping our future leaders make those important career choices.

We continue our journalistic journey by focusing on our Regional Offices and finding out what they are up to. This quarter, we profile our Free State and Western Cape Regional Offices respectively. Rural development

and youth development are some of the topics my colleagues deal with.

We also bring you up to speed with the Research Symposium and other career exhibitions in the last quarter.

Regarding the future of SETAs, Minister of Higher Education Dr Blade Nzimande recently made known proposals setting forth a new path for this training sector - should you need more information, the details are on our website.

Freedom has been attained; it is now a question of what role young people will play in taking South Africa forward. In signing off, thanks to all our member companies who responded positively to our call to submit the WSPs and ARTs. We are delighted with your cooperation; you have made skills development a winner.

Be blessed during this Youth Month!



**Sibongiseni  
Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni**  
Editor





# A VIEW FROM THE TOP

*The merSETA National Conference held in May this year was a remarkable success, with clear routes for all stakeholders to close the skills gap.*

**A**s we chart a new landscape, one thing is clear – both organised labour and industry believe that we can make massive inroads into the critical and scarce skills shortages in South Africa.

Minister Blade Nzimande, our keynote speaker, was clear about the role SETAs play in our economy. We are an integral part of the economy and while the SETA landscape may change in terms of his department's new proposals, post-school education and training under the auspices of SETAs will remain a key feature of government.

While the world still reels under the weight of incessant monetary and fiscal constraints, South Africa has been saved dire economic consequences through its prudent economic policies and a secure banking system.

Latest figures from national Treasury show that South Africa grew at its fastest pace in nearly two years, with overall output in this year's first quarter jumping to 4,6 percent compared with the final quarter of last year.

The spine of this remarkable achievement was the manufacturing, mining and financial sectors.

Indications, according to Treasury, are that our economy will grow by at least 3% this year, compared to a shrinkage of 1,8% last year. This is clearly a good prognosis and bodes well for increased employment, given the staggering job losses last year.

Our conference expressed strong support for merSETA, especially its ground-breaking projects such as the Accelerated Artisan Training Programme, the New Venture Creation programme etc.

We have pioneered initiatives that are the envy of many training institutions. And the conference's mandate that

we underline our links with higher education institutions is further proof of the merSETA's fortitude.

As government begins the public process of engagement on the new SETA landscape, our testimony is clear to all.

We are forging the future of higher education and learning – and will continue to do so!

Sincerely,

**Dr Raymond Patel**  
CEO merSETA

# letters...



*Your opinion matters - Please send in your comments, queries or suggestions to: [achieve@merseta.org.za](mailto:achieve@merseta.org.za) or Achieve, P.O. Box 61826, Marshalltown 2107.*

The changes on Datanet system have really been of extreme assistance to us and the system is extremely user friendly. Please tell your colleagues and management that I wish to congratulate them on all of your hard work and extreme professional services!!! You are a great team.

Kind Regards,

Magda Steffen

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Regarding the Mandatory Grant submission we really found that it was more user friendly than the previous year. (Perhaps because it was the second time?!)

Kind regards,

Rina Fourie

---

I must congratulate the merSETA for making the best effort of all SETAs in the upgrade of the website and the convenience of the electronic submission. It's a pleasure to work with, no fuss, no nonsense, asking for the right detail and the sources required.

Shell Ultra City is not only a plain service station as the name sounds but a complex business with more than one facet.

Management of this company is very hands on and they know the abilities and shortcomings of each employee and each position.

The planning went smooth and fairly easy due to the above. No challenges that could not be overcome were experienced.

Kind Regards,

Fanie Agenbach

---

We had no difficulties at all planning training for the 2010/11 period. We have a simple operation going and know what to do.

Kind Regards,

Thulani Ngcobo

## **Achieve Newsletter would like to congratulate Puleng Phala who is the winner an incredible iPod Nano.**

*We asked our loyal readers to take part in our survey aimed at making Achieve even better and your suggestions and comments are allowing us to come up with new features that make Achieve even more of a 'must read' publication. Once again we thank our readers for their input and help and wish Puleng many happy hours of iPod enjoyment.*

*Warm regards, The Achieve Team.*

# National Conference UPS ANTE IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

By Own Correspondent

*With more than 350 delegates attending from across the country, merSETA's national stakeholder conference was a display of forging the future.*

**m**erSETA received a powerful endorsement in May when it attracted more than 350 delegates and some of the country's most prominent thinkers at its national conference in Johannesburg.

"Our sectoral education and training authorities are critical to our human resource development strategy, and it is my view that this Manufacturing, Engineering and Related services SETA is particularly important," said Minister of Higher Education and Training Dr Blade Nzimande in his keynote address.

"The vision of this SETA is critical to the goals of government," he added in a resounding endorsement of merSETA's programmes.

"You have set yourselves the goal of facilitating the sustainable development of skills transformation and to accelerate growth in manufacturing, engineering and related services. Your role is fundamental to the task of developing the human capability necessary to the success of the Industrial Policy Action Plan – IPAP – which was adopted by cabinet this year," Dr Nzimande added.

IPAP aims to scale up South Africa's efforts to promote long-term industrialisation and industrial diversification beyond reliance on traditional commodities and non-traditional services.

"To achieve this, we aim to expand production in value-added sectors with high employment and growth multipliers that compete in export markets as well as compete in the domestic market against imports.

Dr Nzimande said that emphasis was being placed on more labour absorbing production and services

sectors and the increased participation of historically disadvantaged people and regions in the economy.

"As government, we believe that manufacturing and other productive sectors of the economy are the engines of long-term sustainable growth and job creation. And we also believe that this engine of growth depends on appropriately skilled people."

He further congratulated merSETA for its pioneering projects such as the Accelerated Artisan Training Programme (AATP).

"I believe that you have more than 1 700 apprentices who are following the accelerated training format. The AATP and the Technical Skills Business Partnership (TSBP) has contributed to the marked increase in registered apprenticeships which now stands at 6000 apprentices registered within the merSETA levy-paying companies.

"Credit for this initiative belongs not only to you, but also to the participating employers who have worked collectively to share best practice... this is regarded as a model in the field," said the minister.

The conference also drew speakers who strongly supported the need for closer links between merSETA and institutions of higher learning.

Among the notable speakers were Professor Fikile Mazibuko of the University of Zululand, Prof Ihron Rensburg of the University of Johannesburg, noted strategist Dr Clem Sunter and Dr Oswald Franks of the Engineering Council of South Africa.

Although the speakers drew rapturous applause and incisive questions, it was in the commissions that merSETA was tasked with forging the future.



Scenario and planning strategist Dr Clem Sunter and merSETA CEO Dr Raymond Patel.

**COMMISSION ONE: Forging links between the merSETA, universities and universities of technology**

Should there be a more structured link between SETAs, universities and universities of technology? The answer to this was an unequivocal “Yes” and it is fortunate that the third phase of the National Skills Development Strategy actually requires this.

The further question is what stakeholders could seek to achieve from this relationship. Broadly, they would hope for an approach to training and skills development as well as research that is not only structured but more co-ordinated.

Currently, these activities take place in silos. One of the problem areas identified by the commission was the fact that there were SETAs working in the fields of universities and universities of technology, and vice versa.

Not only would a structured link between institutions provide a clear delineation of activities and responsibilities, it would also assist in the development of a common vision for skills development.

How can this be achieved? The commission’s view was that the process should be driven directly from the office of the Minister of Higher Education and Training. Abdicating the responsibility to the various roleplayers would merely ensure perpetuation of the existing situation where SETAs, universities and universities

of technology entered into ad hoc memorandums of understanding.

**COMMISSION TWO: Forging links between the merSETA and further education and training (FET) institutions**

The commission felt existing links should be strengthened and said seven key points needed to be addressed:

1. Partnerships and some pockets of excellence already existed - what was needed was for the merSETA to act as a champion of these pockets of excellence and ensure that the lessons learned through the more successful partnerships were replicated elsewhere.
2. While the five-year sector skills plan (SSP) was an important mechanism, merSETA should consider taking a more long-term view to identifying opportunities and threats to the sector. There would need to be significant alignment between Government’s strategic programmes (for example, the Industrial Policy Action Plan) and the operational activities proposed in the SSP.
3. Ensuring the sustainable development of rural learners. Community training and development projects should focus not only on learner throughput and project completion but also on the transfer of real, sustainable skills into those communities.





Left: Dr Blade Nzimande addressing delegates; Right: Conference Delegates.

4. The commission recognised that while opportunities exist for the P1 initiative to be conducted by means of providers creating simulated working environments, a strengthened partnership between the merSETA, industry and organised labour would allow P2 to take place. Long-term funding would, however, be necessary.
  5. merSETA's support for maths and science projects must be increased to improve learner throughput rates.
  6. Learner support. Learners are individuals who often have to navigate their ways through myriad complex circumstances without assistance on fundamental issues such as career guidance and finding the balance between theoretical acquisition of knowledge and its application in the workplace.
  7. Career guidance within FET institutions. What was instead required was ongoing advice in terms of what choice of a career would entail in terms of learning, employment, earning and professional development opportunities.
- Recipients of training and the end-users of skills i.e. employers. The commission felt these stakeholders would be interested in ensuring there was effective feedback from this category, through the provider stakeholder group, to the merSETA with regard to the actual impact of the acquired skills on their business activities. For instance, employers of people trained through the Accelerated Artisan Training Programme have to inform the programme providers and designers of the strengths and shortcomings of their efforts in order to ensure continuous improvement.

There was a general perception that engagement would be more difficult particularly in light of the proposed move of the motor and petrol retail sub-sectors from the merSETA to the Wholesale and Retail SETA. Among the complications was the fact that the wholesale and retail sector did not have a bargaining council and that this lack of a structured platform to debate skills issues would hamper personal development and career progression.

**COMMISSION THREE: Forging better links between the merSETA and its sectoral stakeholders**

The commission conducted its discussions on two levels: by seeking to clarify who the stakeholders were (with specific reference to the benefits that could accrue through engagement with the merSETA) and what opportunities existed for ties between the two parties to be strengthened. merSETA stakeholders could be grouped into two key categories:

- Education and training providers including universities and universities of technology, public and private FET institutions, specialist consultants, private training organisations and workplaces in which training was conducted.

The commission felt that interaction between merSETA and this category should be focused on disseminating information more effectively to ensure a smooth transfer of knowledge, particularly in the skills development environment. Engagement should be geared to improving the quality of training provision as well as learner throughput rates, and building capacity within the providers.

*“Credit for this initiative belongs not only to you, but also to the participating employers”*

The dichotomy between the SETA that governed skills development in the production environment and that which oversaw it in the retail sphere meant that a gap would emerge when it came to career progression.

Finally, the commission believed the merSETA needed to create an increasing number of ambassadors among stakeholders who had benefited from skills development interventions. Ideally, people in poor and rural communities should not have to travel to a merSETA or Department of Higher Education and Training office to obtain information about skills development opportunities in the manufacturing and engineering-related services sector. This should be done by every single stakeholder.

For more information visit [www.merseta.org.za](http://www.merseta.org.za)

*Achieve spoke to the Free State and Northern Cape region on their*

# SUCCESSSES & CHALLENGES...

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

***What is the mandate of the Free State and Northern Cape and how far have you progressed toward achieving its goals?***

As the regional footprint of merSETA, our mandate is to deliver a quality service to our stakeholders, and also meet some quantitative weighting – which we see as the NSDS targets. We have little difficulty in meeting these mandates to address the needs of our stakeholders. Our challenges lie in areas where the NSDS targets exceed the demands of our stakeholders – and these areas are ABET and Experiential Learners.

In terms of the satisfaction of our stakeholders, this has recently been measured in a Customer Satisfaction Index. The results show that 85% of stakeholders are satisfied with the service they are getting. Raising the bar is important to us, and we are identifying the 15% that might have had a less positive merSETA experience.

***What does youth development mean to you as a region and what strides have you made in trying to address the plight of young people?***

Realising that we are responsible for moulding the youth into accountable adults of the future, we are embarking on all possible initiatives to ensure the holistic development of the youth in the two provinces that we are responsible for i.e. the Free State and the Northern Cape. To this end, we have engaged in a project with the office of the Premier of the Free State, which saw 250 youth qualifying after an NQF level 1 learnership project.

The same learners have progressed to an NQF level 2 learnership in either Automotive Repair and Maintenance or Welding. Most of them have completed this programme. Another very successful programme is our Welding NQF level 2 learnership, run for learners from Dr Bohmer School. This is a school for Children with Special Educational Needs. Our employer partner for this project is SA Truck Bodies, situated in Bloemfontein.

We do have some interesting programmes lined up which are focused on Secondary School learners and those learners who have recently matriculated.

***You have been tasked with driving skills development in the Northern Cape and Free State, both provinces faced with huge challenges of unemployment. How has the region responded to this particular challenge?***

Considering the relatively small GDP impact that comes from our two provinces, it should be understood that we really lack the larger industries that you will find in some other provinces, especially in the Metals Manufacturing, Motor Manufacturing, New Tyre and Plastic Chambers. This, against the backdrop of excellent Higher Education Establishments and above average matric results, generally makes the Free State and Northern Cape provinces exporters of skills to other provinces and sadly loses large numbers of learners. What is important to us is to make every effort to link learners with employers who might offer employment to successful learners.

***What partnerships do you have in place to promote skills?***

Our strategic partners for both provinces that we are responsible for include the Office of the Premier, Departments of Social Development, Labour and Education. We have a very strong Training Provider and Skills Development Forum to support any initiative that we roll out. This forum includes the provincial providers on our Voucher Implementation Programme. As far as possible we try to link business to the providers in our region before venturing outside of our borders – and we have been very effective in doing that.

We also have an intimate relationship with the Retail Motor Industry and organised labour, which enables us to reach and support our shared clients.

Client Relations Manager, Gerhard Slabbert.

*“We also have an intimate relationship with the Retail Motor Industry and organised labour, which enables us to reach and support our shared clients.”*





From left: Andre van Wyk (CLO), Yvonne Reed (General Assistance), Mathilda Potgieter (CLC), Shaheeda de Kock (Receptionist), Isaac Ben (CLO) & Gerhard Slabbert (CRM).

I attribute the success of our region to all of these partnerships, as well as a team of highly motivated staff, firstly from the regional office staff but also from all merSETA divisions.

***As we celebrate 10 years of skills development through SETAs, what are some of the achievements the region prides itself on?***

As the merSETA region of the year in 2008, we are proud that we are providing excellent service to our clients. During our latest national Customer Satisfaction Index, we have again reached the highest score of 85%. We therefore believe we are building a track record of success in our liaisons with clients – but we strive to avoid a sense that we have “arrived” and need to improve our performance to a score of at least 90%. We are perhaps one of the more fortunate regions in the sense of healthy provincial linkages and strong partners.

Statistically it might be of interest to consider that this year we have been involved in the following training interventions:

| Category   | Number |
|--|--------|
| Learners (Including Apprentices, learnerships and Skills Programmes) | 820    |
| Small levy paying companies supported                                | 246    |
| Training of SDFs in the use of the Career Guide                      | 128    |
| Other categories include ABET, Experiential Learners, Interns, etc.  |        |
| Grants paid to companies   | 240    |

When one considers these figures with some of our mega-regions, it might not look that impressive – but when one realises there is only one Client Liaison Coordinator (CLC) and three Client Liaison Officers (CLOs) marketing and monitoring all these processes, with only 540 active levy-paying employers, then it

becomes clear that this is a remarkable achievement. We need to consider that before merSETA, the Motor Industry Training Board annually administered and monitored about 195 apprentices in this region. We are proud of our achievements in this regard.

***In moving forward, merSETA has made it clear that rural development will top its agenda. What is the region doing to further the rural development agenda?***

Some of the involvement in terms of rural development is the 250 learners’ project sponsored by the Premier of the Free State with a clear mandate that learners MUST come from all districts in the province. So, even the most rural districts are proportionately included. We are also engaging with Community Based Organisations and municipalities in the most remote districts to run projects with their members.

***Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel wants emphasis on manufacturing, infrastructure development and rural development to stimulate the economy and create jobs. What role is merSETA going to play in assisting the government in this regard?***

The answer is New Venture Creation leading to incubation and the hand-holding of new business owners until such time that the umbilical cord can be cut, to allow for the productive blossoming of new ventures in industry. This will be a worthwhile project that should be initiated in each region. At national level, discussion should be held with strategic partners such as the SEDA, IDC etc and then implemented in each region – prioritising the most rural areas.

We are actively pursuing support to retrenchees by offering the merSETA Retrenchment Assistance programme to the workers affected by retrenchment, thereby strengthening the pool of skilled workers and ensuring easier absorption into the formal or informal sector.

# merSETA KZN Launches novel Youth Project

*The merSETA KwaZulu-Natal Regional office and the Office of the Presidency launched a major project for the unemployed youth last month, reports our own correspondent.*



From left: President Jacob Zuma with merSETA Staff and Senior Management.



KZN Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize.

**A**ll eyes were aflutter when President Jacob Zuma personally attended the launch of the project in Durban aimed at eradicating poverty and halving the unemployment rate in the province

merSETA Client Relations Manager Mr Musa Mtshali told the august audience that at least 76 learners would initially be part of the high-end project.

“merSETA pledged 76 learnerships and apprentices which were announced during youth month last year by President Jacob Zuma. This initiative seeks to contribute towards government’s commitment to alleviate poverty and address skills shortage in the country,” said Musa.

The project consists of 65 apprentices and 11 learners. At least 30 companies will host the learners. Musa said 97% of these companies were small establishments. The spread of participating companies covers 80% of rural areas in KZN.



Dancers.

The project follows the success of Asgisa which merSETA supported by funding 39 apprentices through the National Skills Fund (NSF) in 2008. Eight of these apprentices have recently qualified as artisans. It is envisaged this youth project will go beyond what is expected in terms of closing the skills gap.

# Hansing Engineering *Raises the Bar*

By Own Correspondent

*Hansing Engineering (PTY) Ltd heeded the call to close the skills gap when it immediately embarked on radical training initiatives to boost the labour force. For this, it has received a special award from merSETA.*

**F**aced with a rapid decline in good artisans and a decline in production, Hansing Engineering grabbed the proverbial bull by the horns and launched an in-house training centre in 2004 at the time when merSETA introduced the learnership route to qualification.

The fully-equipped artisan training centre offers practical training in conjunction with an accredited local Further Education and Training (FET) college.

Being ambitious, it became clear that to ensure best practice, it would have to receive full accreditation as a private FET College.

Hansing Engineering's zeal and tenacity paid dividends when they were fully accredited by the merSETA in 2007.

They were accredited in the following trades: Machining, Fitting and Fitting and Turning. Their efforts didn't go unnoticed by merSETA; they were also awarded top training company status by merSETA in 2008 for contributing immensely to the fight against skills shortages.

Asked about the recruitment process, HR/Financial Manager Karien Terblanche says: "Learners are recruited through intake tests to ensure maximum commitment to the training programme. It has been found that approximately 10% of all candidates screened by the company meet the criteria.

"Any prospective learner's intellectual vividness and ability to solve mathematical applications is tested before proceeding to measure understanding as well as specific abilities such as pattern completion, figure series, verbal comprehension, and spatial 2- and 3-D. The last leg of the test includes a practical test, eye-hand coordination as well as the appropriateness of the candidate to this specific work environment is established."

Learners who pass the tests progress to National Qualification Framework (NQF) Levels. At the same time, more learners are trained from NQF Level 2 to ensure the continuous intake of unemployed learners.

Not only is the backlog in artisan training addressed successfully, but most importantly, the focus on standards, expertise and efficiency is maintained throughout the process.

So far, 204 training interventions have been offered and a 100% pass rate maintained. An average of 95% of trainees either find meaningful employment after completion or continue up the learnership ladder, thereby significantly contributing to the pool of qualified artisans in the metal sector in the Western Cape region.

*"It has been found that approximately 10% of all candidates screened by the company meet the criteria."*

One of the rewards Hansing Engineering cherish most when looking back at the past few years, is the employment of their top students, now productive, qualified artisans, some in senior positions with a bright future ahead of them.

It is befitting for other companies to take a leaf out of the experience and methods book of companies like Hansing Engineering in raising the bar on issues of skills development.



Top: Shane Bowles machining a left-hand square thread.  
Bottom: Macneal Samuels milling components for his pipe-vice project.

*merSETA Western Cape*

# CHAMPIONS SKILLS REVOLUTION

By Sibongiseni Zinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*With about 889 levy paying companies and 911 non-levy paying companies, the merSETA Western Cape Regional Office is the epitome of a skills Development agency. Achieve caught up with the Client Relations Manager, Ms Bronwin Abrahams, on the current activities of the regional office.*

**A**sked about interventions made by the regional office in promoting skills development in the region, Ms Abrahams is enthusiastic about the gains.

“The regional office has been very active in creating awareness of different paths to obtain a qualification through skills development processes. We also continue with our drive of career guidance with school educators, skills development facilitators and sector specialists.”

These activities in the region reflect the enthusiasm of the entire office. Recent outreaches have included exhibitions and career expos such as the SABC Career Fair, My Career Fair, the Industrial Showcase and various community development initiatives including the Bishop Lavis and Delft area initiative arranged by Saint Gobain Construction Products Academy, the Bonteheuvel area through the Young Communist League of South Africa and the Mitchell’s Plain Education Summit.

Speaking about their recent successes, Ms Abrahams was quick to point out that major gains in this field have been the result of partnerships, rather than a case of merSETA going it alone.

“Our partnership with Local and Provincial Government has been instrumental in supporting the identified strategic growth areas that fall within our sector. These are the tooling, boatbuilding and oil & gas sectors. merSETA is represented through the Regional Office

on the advisory boards of all of the initiatives. Thus far, we have supported the Tooling initiative by making discretionary grants available to member companies,” she says.

“Together with SANGOCO, we played a key role in reviving the Provincial Skills Development Forum in the Western Cape. This forum is now being taken forward by the Western Cape SETA cluster and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism.”

Although the activities of merSETA in the Western Cape show that training and development are strategic priorities for the region, there are challenges.

“We have about 1800 merSETA registered companies within the Western Cape, yet only 415 are currently training apprentices and learners. Unemployed people enquire every day on how they can become apprentices or learners, and it is difficult to advise them as we cannot commit to any placement. The challenge has always been to convince more companies to participate in order to alleviate unemployment.”

These challenges are, however, being addressed. merSETA Western Cape is constantly building partnerships with non-government/profit organisations and youth development organisations in an effort to assist them to access funding for projects and training initiatives.



*“We have about  
1800 merSETA  
registered  
companies  
within the  
Western Cape.”*





“We also use opportunities created through the Regional Committee (RC) to encourage their member companies to actively participate in skills development. The regional office has an active Training Provider Forum (TPF) which continuously consults and liaises with Further Education Training (FET) Colleges and private training providers.”

But there are still obstacles. Ms Abrahams notes it has been difficult to get companies enthusiastic about training and development. “Some companies are reluctant to get involved due to the perceived impact on production time. Some companies are more eager than others and we hope to convert the ill-informed soon.”

An example of a progressive training company is TRW in Atlantis, which believes in training on a continuous basis. Staff is committed to the process and demonstrate this by sacrificing their personal time for training. Everyone has invested in the development and growth of the company’s human resources, resulting in a more successful organisation. Ms Abrahams notes that other companies should benchmark their performance and commitment against this example.

merSETA has recently become ISO accredited and was voted as one of the best employers for the year 2009/10. When asked what this had meant for the region, Ms Abrahams was quick to point out the impact of both

the accreditation and the recognition of merSETA as an employer of choice.

“This has encouraged the region immensely. It has been instrumental in improving our administrative processes and procedures. Knowing there is uniformity at the merSETA enables us to confidently deal with administrative and stakeholder related queries. As an employee, being associated with a company voted best employers for the year 2009/10 is gratifying. The regional team is supportive and confident about the leadership. We support any initiative to maintain this status,” she commented.

When asked for her views on the changing SETA landscape, Ms Abrahams said: “With skills development now under the leadership of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), we are bound to make greater in-roads in the skills development sector. I believe more opportunities will be created by working in tandem with higher education rather than working in silos, as we have common goals.”

The JIPSA’s 2007 annual report indicated that South Africa is producing 5000 artisans per annum, whilst the research suggests that at least 12 500 should be produced each year in the next four years. Ms Abrahams has definite ideas of what could be done to increase the

Standing (from left): Colette Cornelius (Receptionist), Cebisa Mbalo (CLC), Anton Michillies (CLO), Herman Elema (CLO), Ghaleed Amlay (ETQA Quality Assuror), Gavin February (ETQA Quality Assuror), Stanley Matthews (CLO), Denver Davids (CLO), Franklin Zinn (ETQA Quality Assuror) & Thethiwe Nduna (General Assistance); Seated (from left): Ndileka Ndzolo (CLC), Nyameka Sonjica (CLC), Charlene Gillies (Snr CLC), Lynette Nyikisa (CLO), Bronwin Abrahams (CRM) & Nasir Solarie (CLO).

*“I do believe that the changes will be in the best interest of skills development in the country. With skills development now under the leadership of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), we are bound to make greater in-roads in the skills development sector.”*

number of artisans so vital for economic progress of the country.

“I do believe that the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) pilot initiative that is currently being rolled out will help address the artisan shortage. We have many skilled workers who don’t have formal qualifications and this needs attention.”

There has been some discussion on whether SETAs have delivered on their mandate, given their performance in the last 10 years. Ms Abrahams has some definite thoughts on this discussion. “The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) II was particularly challenging, as it took a considerable amount of time to organise SETAs as a whole. The perception that SETAs have not delivered may stem from a lack of marketing of the achievements. The perceptions may also be linked to a lack of understanding of the role of SETAs. I hope these perceptions will be changed with SETAs having moved to DHET,” she adds.

Part of the discussion of the effectiveness of the SETA's has been around the quality of service delivery and turnaround times. The Western Cape Regional Office has dealt with these challenges in a way that has forged closer ties between their operation and partners.

“We have overcome some of our challenges through advocacy by creating partnerships with different stakeholders that can assist us in achieving our goals. We are committed to improving our service delivery to our clients on a continuous basis and as part of the Operations Division within the merSETA, we are committed to the idea of THE CUSTOMER IS KING.

“We hope to live this motto by striving towards service excellence. Our clients are all equally important to us and are entitled to the same amount of attention,” says Ms Abrahams.

Ms Abrahams has some words of encouragement (and warning) for the youth of South Africa.

“Young people need to take ownership of their future by exploring all possible avenues for upliftment through skills development and education. I would advise them to stay committed to completing their schooling and refrain from indulging in cheap thrills. I believe that if you are willing to take a chance on yourself, then someone will be willing to take a chance on you,” she concluded.

# Bursary Scheme; Engineering Future Leaders

By Sibongiseni Zinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*In 10 years of spearheading skills development, the merSETA bursary scheme has funded more than 2000 students. This includes about 450 people who have graduated and been employed.*

**T**he majority of the bursary recipients are from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, and programmes funded include Fundamental Management for Women.

“There is still a fairly high dropout rate and my aim is to increase the employment rate and reduce the drop out rate”, says the bursary scheme Manager, Ms Camilla Smith.

Studies show that at university level, only one-third of students graduate within four years of enrolling. About 35% of students drop out of degree studies, 52% out of certificate or diploma studies and 70% out of distance higher education. At further education & training (FET) colleges, almost 50% of students drop out, and of those who remain, only 57% pass. So only about 29% of students eventually pass, which is a big concern, not only for Camilla, but for South Africa as a whole.

In the 2009 academic year, merSETA awarded 423 bursaries to unemployed learners, mainly in the fields of engineering. Forty-six students graduated at the end of 2009. Camilla says the bursary scheme has provided assistance to a further 200 people employed by merSETA-linked companies. These bursaries are for specific management training and development programmes.

“Who would have thought that the person quietly working on the production line would excel at his National Diploma in Production Management? He was so keen that he offered to refund merSETA when he got promoted,” she points to one of the success stories. Asked about the meaning of youth month, Camilla says it is a time to reflect on hope and success.

“We are making a difference! South Africa has come

a long way in addressing the skills shortage and the challenge lies with young people seizing the opportunities presented to them,” she says. Like any other programme, the bursary scheme has its challenges.

“The biggest challenge is ensuring that learners get some sort of support while studying. It is not sufficient just to provide funding. Many of these learners are the first in their community to be given the opportunity to study further and the challenge can be daunting.”

As such they have no support network and no one to advise them on what to expect.

“They may have excelled in maths and science at school level, because they were fortunate enough to have a passionate teacher who tutored them all afternoon every day. But when they arrive at university and suddenly have to cope with planning their own lives, they’re alone -- often for the first time in a big city.

“Imagine what it’s like to come from a rural village in Limpopo where you shared a shack with three siblings? Coming to study in Johannesburg on its own becomes a challenge and coping with the changes around you becomes a nightmare,” says Camilla.

To assist learners in overcoming these peculiar challenges, Camilla says they are planning to visit campuses to find out first hand what the problems are and how they can assist.

“I want to set up a system of mentorship where as part of their obligations, experienced bursary holders must form study groups with other merSETA learners and mentor first-year learners – perhaps in some sort of buddy programme,” adds Camilla.



From left: Bursary Administrator Precious Ledwaba, Bursary Scheme Manager Camilla Smith and Bursaries Temp Thobeka Magagula.

With funding being made available, Camilla is of the view that too much emphasis is placed on making funding available for studying further, and not enough on finding employment within the industry and developing and growing the skills base.

“We need to be more involved in the interface between the needs of the individuals to qualify and becoming a contributing member of society. merSETA has committed R25 million in the bursary scheme for this financial year.” Camilla says there is a need to grow the economy in order to absorb recipients of bursaries.

The move of SETAs to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) will create greater synergy between merSETA and institutions of higher learning.

“This will lead to better links between the institutions, SETAs and the corporate world, and thus fortify the efforts of eradicating unemployment amongst young people,” she says.

Asked about the achievements of the bursary scheme, Camilla says a success story is a Masters Engineering student at the University of Stellenbosch, who has been with the merSETA programme throughout her tertiary education. She will qualify at the end of 2010.

Another success story is Matthew Cross, who is employed by a transport engineering company linked to the Gautrain project, and has been voted one of the top 10 young engineers.

“These learners have excelled,” Camilla says.

The bursary scheme administers 500 students each semester, and Camilla says each student receives personal attention.

“Most need nagging to give you what you need and then demand instant attention. Till now the paper chase and bureaucracy has taken more than 80% of our time and energy. We have not been able to address the more crucial problems of poor performance and mentoring. It is no good just suspending a bursary when a student fails,” she notes.

merSETA’s Bursaries Department is also confronted with students’ personal challenges.

“We have had one student whose mother died. Then his father passed on, all in one semester. We only found out when the results showed that a star student had failed almost the whole semester. He did not know that counseling & assistance were available at the university, and fortunately we were able to assist him back on track. Not all are so lucky.”

Asked about future prospects of the scheme, Camilla says training institutions must qualify more home-grown engineers to fill industry and grow the country.

She further urged young people to believe in themselves. “You limit your own horizons by fear and doubt. Dream big even if it seems impossible; then take one step at a time towards that dream. If you want to be a world leader, start by leading yourself to the front of the classroom and get people to follow one by one - never give up hope.”

As we celebrate 10 years of skills development, we celebrate all those that took the bull by the horns and seized the moment in achieving their dream, South Africa is indebted to you and as merSETA we can do so much to help young people achieve their dreams.



**merSETA**  
 MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
 AND RELATED SERVICES SETA  
 ISO 9001:2008

# What makes the merSETA different!

By Own Correspondent

*Efficiency, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder or as Deborah Stone articulates the difficulty, "efficiency is a comparative idea".*

**T**he merSETA, though always one of the largest SETAs in terms of scope of coverage and revenue, was not in its early years regarded as one of the more successful SETAs. In fact, it was characterised by significant challenges that arose from a traditionally antagonistic relationship between its key decision makers, namely organised labour and employer bodies - a relationship that took its toll on governance and strategic planning, and saw no less than six CEO's or acting CEO's in the space of seven years attempting to reconcile divergent sectoral, political and class interests.

Far smaller SETAs, with a smaller membership base and significantly less revenue, had in the first phase of the implementation of the National Skills Development Strategy (2000-2005) achieved far greater respect amongst both stakeholders and authorities, thereby proving the maxim that wealth does not make for success. After a series of near disastrous decisions based on attempting to satisfy the respective interests of divergent stakeholders, the reality of the need for a co-operative governance model emerged, in which all parties stood to gain from key initiatives aimed at addressing the polar requirements of employers, labour and government.

## Governance

The appointment of a dedicated senior manager of Corporate Governance ushered in a new period in 2006/2007. The mandate was to ensure total

procurement compliance, best practice in terms of the then King I and II Codes, and administrative consistency and standards across the Governing Board and all its sub-committees. The employer and labour stakeholders had recognized the need for a radically new approach, and Risk and Audit Committees were introduced, along with a range of other initiatives that involved multi-year strategic planning, as well as a concerted focus on capacity building and development of the various structures of the organisation.

## Leadership

It appears that the best leaders are those that possess or develop a strategic understanding of challenges and opportunities, including their own strengths and weaknesses. This requires generalist capacities and an active imagination open to many possibilities as well as a good system of values to choose the best from among the many possibilities or courses of action. It is often argued "the fish rots from the head", and these efforts would not have been sustainable without the appointment of new leadership, in the form of Dr Raymond Patel, fresh from the CEO position of the respected Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority (CHIETA).

Dr Patel wasted no time in assembling a complete senior management team, and putting in place mechanisms for talent management, including most critically, the appointment of a new Chief Financial Officer (after a long period of acting incumbents) as



merSETA Management Team.

well as the establishment of a new Projects Division, which was to focus on piloting large-scale, new initiatives, outside of the traditional operations of the organisation.

### **Corporate Services**

Effective leaders develop both managerial and leadership behaviours and qualities. An investment in the development of leaders is an investment in individual and organisational growth and renewal. It has been suggested that the most significant contributions leaders make are to the long term development of people and institutions who adapt, prosper and grow. Human Resource Management also received new attention, with the introduction of increasingly sophisticated mechanisms and personnel to focus on areas including performance management linked to the strategic objectives, balanced scorecard and service level agreement with the Department of Labour, as well as staff development and retention.

There was also a growing concern at all levels around the need to communicate the right information to the right people at the right time, coupled with the need to market and publicise the products and services – and successes – of the organisation. This remains a challenge.

### **Projects**

A need had emerged after the SETA re-establishment in 2006 to rationalise and co-ordinate the proliferation of projects within the merSETA, as well as to develop

institutional memory and capacity, in order to reduce costs and maximise return on investment and lessons learned. The establishment of an internal Projects Division was key to ensuring this, as well as ownership of processes and outcomes. The Projects Division emerged as the organisational centre for “thought leadership” that manifested in a number of innovative initiatives, and now counts no less than 16 different projects, organised in five streams, in its portfolio. Often, as is the nature with pilot projects, better ways of doing things emerge that are filtered through to other areas of operation in the organisation, where possible.

### **Research and Development**

By 2008 it had become apparent that the traditional approaches to skills planning, characterised by outsourcing arrangements, were no longer appropriate. Management and Board decided to establish an internal Research and Development function, to be housed within the Projects Division that would have as its primary aim the production of the annual Sector Skills Plan (SSP) update and Scarce and Critical Skills Lists. These are meant to guide and influence decisions around key projects, programmes and initiatives on a year on year basis, as well as reconcile the immediate interests of workplaces with sectoral and national development imperatives.

The establishment of a Research and Development Committee assisted in this goal as well as created a champion mechanism for a new approach and model to sector skills planning that by its very nature required new

*“Like all SETAs, the merSETA is dependent on a large bureaucratic infrastructure, comprising departments, institutions and complex funding arrangements.”*

partnerships and cooperation agreements with numerous national as well as international institutions in order to leverage and maximise limited resources. Pro-active approaches to participation in national and international conferences and publications through presentations and journal articles have insured a consistent focus on the “bigger picture” and impact, as well as the development of a rich research and development network.

#### **Client Services**

The introduction of a new service orientation initially assumed a corporate language, with the introduction of a Client Services Division and segmentation of targets, by prioritising star performers and key players amongst member companies (“established”), as well as “developmental” and “new business” entrants. Financial resources were to be allocated accordingly, and human resources reallocated within the provincial offices, on the basis of different service offerings and packages, linked to a new approach of signing Memoranda of Agreement with client companies that repositioned their relationship with the merSETA, as not only grantees and beneficiaries, but as service providers towards meeting national skills development targets and objectives.

#### **Partnerships**

The active pursuit of partnerships at all levels has become an increasing feature of the merSETA’s strategy to broaden its influence and reach beyond immediate sectoral interests and financial limitations. These take place primarily through Memoranda of Understanding, as well as co-funding approaches, and invariably are based on issues of national concern, linked to the merSETA strategic objectives, such as the mechanisms to address the “stock and flow of skills” (supply and demand, the learner “pipeline”, provision of structured workplace experience, career pathways, and the linkages between public providers (FET Colleges) and industry). Implementation issues are not neglected, and another significant development has included collaboration with the Public Sector (UIF, DoL and Local Government)

around the Accelerated Artisan Training Programme (AATP) by sharing systems platforms and coaching project staff from the public sector - at no cost - with a view to rebuilding lost capacity for artisan development in the Public sector.

#### **Conclusion**

The National Skills Development Strategy seeks to address two overriding priorities: first, South Africa is part of a global economy and it needs to increase skills within the country to improve productivity and the competitiveness of South Africa’s industry, business, commerce and services, and secondly, there are inequalities in our society, and we need to address them so as to make our society more inclusive and to encourage greater cohesion. As a far-reaching strategy aimed at systemic transformation through the participation of employers, organised labour, and institutions of civil society, the NSDS requires formidable organisational and managerial leadership at all levels of its complex infrastructure to achieve any measure of success.

Like all SETAs, the merSETA is dependent on a large bureaucratic infrastructure, comprising departments, institutions and complex funding arrangements. Consequently, the challenge is to combine different approaches: to at the top of the strategic game, envision the future, and map out specific plans about how to get there; to assemble and organise the people, policies, programmes and principles; to assemble teams with specific expertise, and establish and review rules, systems, procedures and values, all the while acting as an agent of radical change, streamlining bureaucracy and assisting business, educational, and labour leaders to embrace the new and different. This combination of competencies requires political and organisational savvy, and a fair degree of what Robert Reich refers to as “leadership as courtship”.



*Barloworld, merSETA and Rhodes Investec Partnership*

# Coming of Age

By Sibongiseni Zinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*The partnership between Barloworld Motor Retail, merSETA and Rhodes Investec yielded sterling results when 18 learners graduated with a Barloworld Certificate in Management: Automotive Retail. The graduation ceremony took place in Johannesburg recently.*



Barloworld graduates.

**T**his pilot project is the first of its kind in which learners received certificates in Management: Automotive Retail, a formal qualification that forms part of the Barloworld Motor Retail General Manager Development Programme. The qualification is offered at National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 7.

Passionate about the personal development of his employees, Chief Executive of Barloworld Motor Retail Mr Litha Nkombisa says further development of employees is crucial to taking the business further.

“I challenge each graduate to think about areas in the business where profitability or processes can be improved to ensure rigorous future growth.”

Congratulating the graduates, merSETA Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Raymond Patel, reiterated that the merSETA would continue playing a vital role to foster skills development. The class captain, Mr Kevin Lombard, thanked the programme and made specific reference to merSETA’s involvement.

With the success of this pilot project, Barloworld Motor Retail is proceeding with the intake of a further group of learners for 2010. Once again, merSETA and the Rhodes Investec Business School are playing a crucial role in closing the automotive skills gap.

Launched in 2008, the programme was sponsored by merSETA through bursaries while the course material was designed by the Rhodes Investec Business School in conjunction with Barloworld Motors. It is aimed at meeting the needs of the Dealer Principals in their motor outlets.

**The programme includes:**

- Personal mastery, including diversity related issues.
- Automotive Retail industry & the Macro-economic environment.
- Business planning including marketing practices.
- Strategy implementation and change management.
- Leadership and Management.
- Law (commercial, contract) and negotiation skills.
- Reflective learning and presentations on personal growth.

## merSETA Bursary Scheme Produces Engineer of the Year

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*Employed by a transport & engineering company linked to the Gautrain project, he has been voted one of the top 10 young engineers in the country. Matthew Cross describes himself as a true optimist, but is more comfortable as an introvert, a critical thinker and a problem-solver.*

**A**fter completing high school at Witbank Technical High School, Matthew studied for an Industrial Engineering degree through the University of Pretoria. At 26, he is currently finishing his Honours degree in Industrial Engineering.

Asked about his love for engineering, Matthew says due to the fact that he came from a Technical High School, the interest was instilled in him at high school.

“When I reached Grade 10, I had to choose my six subjects. I was indecisive as to which subjects I should choose. For this reason, I decided to take the required six subject plus 2 additional subjects. These were Accounting and Building Construction. Thus at the end of Matric, I had more tools in my toolbox than most - I had the business mindset, as well as the technical mindset,” he says.

After research, focusing specifically on Business Management and Project Management, he then

When the news broke that Matthew was a recipient of a bursary from merSETA, he was ecstatic! “I really was having a hard time - a lot harder than my peers, having to work in a temporary job to support myself while studying, which was extremely stressful. Thus, when I was told that I had been successful in acquiring the merSETA Bursary, my life changed immensely. I could now focus primarily on my studies and on achieving my goals.”

Asked about Industrial Engineering, Matthew says it deals with optimising complex processes or systems. It is concerned with the development, improvement, implementation and evaluation of integrated systems of people, money, knowledge, information, equipment, energy, materials and/or processes.

It also deals with designing new product prototypes more efficiently and effectively. Industrial engineering draws upon the principles and methods of engineering analysis and synthesis, as well as the mathematical, physical

*“The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”*

stumbled upon Industrial Engineering which suited his forte like a glove. That was the motivation behind Matthew opting for his field of study.

Matthew says his career allows him exposure to a number of different departments and functional areas within an organisation. “This ensures that I can remain innovative and develop across a company and also get to know the processes and systems of all areas within a business.”

and social sciences, together with the principles and methods of engineering design to specify, predict and evaluate the results to be obtained from such systems or processes.

Born and bred in Witbank, life in the big city of Johannesburg wasn't going to be easy for Matthew: “It was definitely a case of Little Sheep in the Big City at first... coming from a small town and landing in Johannesburg was a major change for me. There was no more depending on parents. I had a lot of growing up to



merSETA bursary holder, Matthew Cross.

*“One must be diligent and hard working in order to achieve the goals that have been set. One must have the hunger and desire to reach the objectives.”*

do in a very short period of time. At times, I felt as if I was just a number, but it’s at the very lowest levels when you realise that you have the strength to conquer anything,” adds Matthew.

He admits the experience might sound scary; however as a new arrival in what seems a whole new world, the feeling is utter bliss. A sense of self fulfillment sets in, you finally have more freedom than you’ve ever had, whilst the sense of responsibility also dawns on you. He referred to his first year of study as the “learning year”. This does not only pertain to learning the theory that is taught, but also the “student life” and adapting to this environment.

Matthew says many students forgot or changed their objectives and fell short of obtaining their goals. “It is for this reason why I advise everyone to ensure that their objective of opting for their career choice must be sound as this will ensure they have enough desire to achieve their goal.”

Asked about the meaning of June 16 and the relevancy of skills development, the youngster says as a country South Africa has made tremendous strides in terms of addressing skills shortage.

However, there’s still a desperate shortage of engineers and skilled labour in our quest to boost the economy. He went on to say that despite this, the country is competitive on a global scale, but some people are still denied opportunities of developing and advancing their careers.

Young people often get caught up in a blame game, where opportunities are presented to them, yet fail to seize the opportunities. But Matthew feels that young

people should grab the opportunities regardless of the outcome. They will learn from that experience and that experience will help in the future.

“One must be diligent and hard working in order to achieve the goals that have been set. One must have the hunger and desire to reach the objectives. If you are like me and have set these precedents/objectives, the choice of pursuing such a career becomes easy. Although I do appreciate the fact that some people are born with the gifts to succeed without any qualifications, I think that in the long run, one’s career can be hindered for not obtaining a specified qualification.”

Matthew is of the view that there is a desperate need for SETAs to exist; “If it were not for the merSETA Bursary that I acquired, I would not be sitting in the position where I find myself right now. merSETA assisted in providing me with the means to fulfill my dreams and acquire my degree.”

When he is not studying or working, Matthew indulges in the outdoor life, having achieved his Springbok colours for scouting. He really gets to enjoy himself on some sporting events.

When asked about his message to young people, Matthew quotes Winston Churchill: “The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

Matthew says this can only be done by acknowledging the differences between people and developing ways to overcome these differences, thus ensuring that a diverse nation is constructed by providing opportunities to everybody and creating a fair platform for everybody within the country.

# Greater Links between SETAs, Institutions of Higher Learning and Industry

By Own Correspondent

*In a move to close the gap between Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and Institutions of Higher Learning and industry, merSETA recently hosted a research symposium in Johannesburg.*

**H**eld to discuss a study conducted by local and international researchers into the thorny issue of linking supply and demand imperatives among SETAs and higher learning institutions, speakers noted the challenges on whether National Certificate Vocation (NCVs) or N courses are more suitable in the South African context of producing good quality graduates

The study was jointly conducted by the University of Nottingham, the Further Education and Training Institute of the University of the Western Cape and the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

In her keynote address, Dr Adrienne Bird, the Acting Deputy Director General: Skills Development in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) said learnerships were often perceived as being lower than apprenticeship. She urged participants to modernise the Nated courses.

The challenge and threat of skills poaching by employers also came under scrutiny, as employers become increasingly reluctant to train.

Dr Bird said in order to raise the skills bar, employers needed to be incentivised, adding that the DHET was exploring options in this regard.

She pointed out that a Human Science Research Council (HSRC) study showed that 70% of a sample of learnership learners were not employed once they

finished their training.

Anthony Gewer's research on 1532 engineering students (noting that these students predated the NCV, and were therefore not NCV students) had shown that 25% were employed and only 50% of these in jobs related to the qualifications they studied.

Thus, in three out of four cases, the engineering course did not result in the intended outcome. The research also showed a strong relationship between work experience and further studies (83%), making it a significant element in employability.

*“In order to raise the skills bar, employers needed to be incentivised.”*

The trade test, the report said, was an important component in industry's ability to promote employability. But apprenticeships appeared to carry more credibility than learnerships, and apprentices have found work more easily. The theory component of the learnership was also being neglected. There were also difficulties in enlisting small employers, since these organisations found taking on learners too expensive (the impact on the payroll was too great), and the learnership relationship too difficult to



Clockwise from top left: Dr Salim Akoojee; Dr Adrienne Bird (Acting Deputy Director General: Skills Development in DHET); Panel of speakers addressing delegates; Delegates at the symposium.

maintain in terms of its requirements such as assessors and maintaining a college relationship.

Bird went on to say that research pointed to the need for more impact measurement and policy reflection, and that the DHET was planning to explore the options through modest piloting with colleges, SETAs and the QCTO as well as new funding arrangements via the NSDS.

Professor Simon McGrath from the University of Nottingham said when there was a skills shortage, employers would taken on whoever they could get. In situations where the market was saturated with potential employees, then employers required more attributes i.e. technical skills alone were not enough. McGrath drew a number of lessons from practices observed during the research including:

- Individual employability is important but insufficient;
- Linkages are central;
- Colleges are making progress, but need more support;
- Recognise social capital. Networks are vital for learners;
- Vocational dimension of teaching, learning and professional identity is core;
- Colleges should be “employable colleges” as described;
- Leadership is central;
- More work is needed on college / employer relationships;

The symposium clearly shows that the future of higher education and training in South Africa is decked with encouraging signs.

# merSETA at the Cutting Edge of Career Guidance

*The merSETA Career Choice Day, the first of its kind since the organisation's inception, was a resounding success, writes Sibongiseni Zinjiva Ka-Mnguni*

**H**eld concurrently with merSETA's National Conference in May this year, the expo attracted more than 500 grade 10-12 pupils. Most of the learners are studying Maths, Science and Technology at six surrounding schools.

The objective of the career day was to communicate the need to close the yawning gap in critical and scarce skills and help sensitise learners when choosing a career in the manufacturing and engineering sector.

The expo saw amazing collaboration between merSETA and Scania, Damelin Technical, the Southern African Institute of Welding, Sci-bono and Komatsu.

Learners from Tembisa, Thokoza and Katlehong heeded the call and descended on the venue, thronging the various exhibitions held by participants.

"I want to study for mechanical engineering, but I do not know what the career entails. I am hoping to get the answers from the exhibitors," said Nonhlanhla Kubheka, who is in grade 12 at Buhlebuzile Secondary School.

The Career Choice Day was based on the Australian concept, try-a-skill, whereby exhibitors demonstrated a particular skill and in turn gave learners an opportunity to do likewise.

Speaking at the Career Choice Day, merSETA Chief Operations Officer Mr Wayne Adams said merSETA is committed to advancing the interests of the youth by making sure career guidance is not only a dream, but is a reality through practical witness.

*"Operation closing the skills gap" is in full swing - don't be left behind.*

merSETA takes this opportunity in thanking all its partners who contributed immensely on the day and thanking the schools for their patronage. "Operation closing the skills gap" is in full swing - don't be left behind.



Clockwise from top: Learners enjoying Career Choice Day; Exhibitors getting interactive with learners; Learners trying their skill; merSETA COO, Mr Wayne Adams delivering a keynote address.

# SACBC Career Camps changing lives

By Catherine Matshego Maganyele

*The merSETA was an eager partner in training camps hosted by the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) in Gauteng, Kwa Zulu- Natal and the Free State.*

**A**ccording to **Bulelwa Dungulu**, the event organiser, the purpose of the camps was to empower vulnerable orphaned children in rural areas and townships by providing information to assist in choosing a career.

The camps brought together 232 learners from grades 11 and 12.

Lack of access to information and funding in terms of bursaries play a significant role in preventing these learners from pursuing their dreams. Exhibitors across different sectors responded to the call to provide information to these learners during the expos.

Well-known personalities like Criselda Kananda, Mike van Niekerk and Namhla Ndlovu graced the occasion. They delivered motivational talks aimed at encouraging youngsters to dream big and start using the opportunities they have been presented with, much to the delight of the young ladies and gentlemen.

The two-day experience combined fun and education but mostly encouraged the learners, and showed them that there is a happy ending is always possible and despite individual circumstances, the glass is always half full and not half empty

The success of these camps will contribute to the agenda of merSETA in reaching out to the deeper rural areas and help leave a lasting legacy by changing the lives of our youth.







Learners at the SACBC Career Camps.

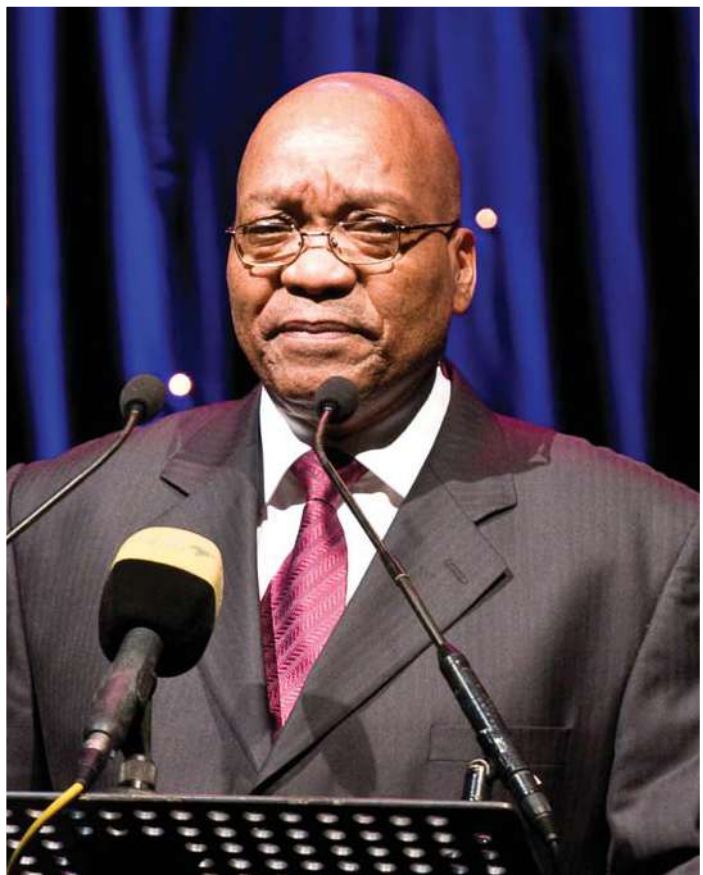


*“The success of these camps will contribute to the agenda of merSETA in reaching out to the deeper rural areas.”*

# Events of the Quarter



Clockwise from top left: CEO Eastern Cape, Mr JJ Mbana; Learners at the merSETA careers for the future 2010; Delegates at the EAP Symposium; Soccer City; President Jacob Zuma delivering a keynote address at the Presidential Youth Project; Exhibitors taking learners through different careers (top); VWSA Academy of Learning receives an award from merSETA (bottom); KwaZulu Natal Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize at the Presidential Youth Project; merSETA protocol officers (top); Delegates at the symposium (bottom).





# leaders in closing the skills gap.

The merSETA is one of the 23 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) established to promote skills development in terms of the Skills Development Act of 1998. The 23 SETAs broadly reflect different sectors of the South African economy. The merSETA encompasses Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services.

The various industry sectors are covered by five chambers within the merSETA: Metal and engineering, Auto Manufacturing, Motor Retail and Components, New Tyre and Plastic.



**merSETA**

MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA

ISO 9001:2008

*facilitating sustainable  
development of skills,  
transformation and  
accelerating growth in  
manufacturing, engineering  
and related services.*



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35 Ridge Road, Berea  
Tel: 0861 637 736  
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Client Relations Manager:  
Musa Mtshali

#### LIMPOPO & MPUMALANGA

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Crescent Route N4  
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#### WESTERN CAPE

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Bronwin Abrahams