

issue 6 december 2009

# Achieve

CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP

Flying the  
merSETA flag high

**ISO Certification &  
Best Employers Award**

*merSETA joins an elite club*



**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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**Achieve issue 6 december 2009**

**on the front cover:**  
peter makaba & sabelo buthelezi

# Contents



# talkingnotes

*"My mission is to make merSETA one of the top three SETAs in the country and to be the employer of choice". This is what Dr Patel said when he took over the reigns at merSETA in 2006. Today this has been achieved, merSETA is one of the top three SETAs, recently receiving ISO 9001 certification as well as being recognised as one of the best employers for 2009/10 by the Corporate Research Foundation (CRF).*

**m**erSETA also scored 4.53 out of 5 for the National Skills Development Strategy targets. The organisation recorded yet another unqualified financial report for the 2008/09 financial year.

These are merSETA's best ever results since its launch in 2000. We have proved our qualification as an employer of choice and our commitment to service delivery.

Congratulations to management, staff and our stakeholders for a splendid performance. Keep up the good work and remember being Leaders in Closing the Skills Gap doesn't come easy. Being tasked with the monumental challenge of reducing the skills gap in our country comes with a lot of responsibility and pressure.

Looking at this edition of the Achieve newsletter; through our participation in the Cell C Career Expo we took the gospel of career choice to the deeper rural areas of our country. This was the third year that merSETA participated in this expo. Career guidance forms a fundamental cornerstone of skills development; hence our appeal to young people to choose careers that will see them contribute meaningfully to the economy of our country.

For the first time we held our Regional Annual General Meetings in all our regions. We thank all our stakeholders for their commitment and their enthusiasm in making our AGM one of the best. We give you an update on the proceedings.

We also bring you up to speed with what is happening at our Mpumalanga/Limpopo Regional Office. We spoke to our Client Relations Manager and Inland Manager to find out what progress has been made in meeting merSETA's strategic goals.

We also have the story of our inaugural INTER-SETA conference held in Midrand, which tackled the critical subject of holistic skills development and most importantly brought all SETAs under one roof.

"Navigating the storm: A roadmap to vision 2020 conference" was the theme of the South African Automotive Week, which was held in Port Elizabeth

recently. merSETA added its voice to what should be done to save the sector which is currently under siege due to the global economic downturn. We report on this interesting and informative event.

We also profile the New Venture Creation Project, as well as the Science, Engineering and Technology Project.

In line with our commitment to giving you the best news coverage in terms of updates on different programmes, projects and events, we have given you the opportunity to tell us what your preferences are in terms of Achieve magazine's content and design.

There's a questionnaire to fill in and return to us. We want you to be part of making this fantastic newsletter even better.

If you would like to write or phone us, our contact details are on the back page of this newsletter.

May I also take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please drive safely and have a well-deserved break.

*Be blessed during this festive season.*



**Sibongiseni  
Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni**  
Editor







# A VIEW FROM THE TOP

*As the year draws to a close, important signs are emerging from Government that the SETAs are an intrinsic feature of the country's education and training landscape.*

**I**n recent months, statements by the State President, Honourable Jacob Zuma, the Minister of Higher Education, Dr Blade Nzimande, and more recently, by the Minister of Economic Development, Mr Ebrahim Patel, have stressed government's faith in SETAs' mandate to plug the scarce skills conundrum.

Now is the time, therefore, for merSETA and its stakeholders, both labour and business, to consolidate our gains in the training arena. As the country moves towards realignment of SETAs, merSETA needs to muster all support from stakeholders to ensure our training paradigm is embedded in the vocational/tertiary and school curricula being developed to enlarge the pool of skilled resources.

As part of this process, merSETA played a significant role in the recent Inter-SETA Summit that was held in Johannesburg. Crucial decisions were taken on SETA synergy, overlapping mandates and focus as well as future sector skills development plans. As government says, "a pro-employment growth path must be underpinned by a high and rising skills base, and this requires a greater coherence between formal schooling, vocational training and workplace learning".

The SETAs control a learning system that is evolving and which is at the nexus of business, labour and recipient learners.

Government is implementing performance-based systems of measurement across every aspect of the public sector:

- The Government-Wide Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation (Cabinet/Monitoring and Evaluation Commission);
- The Performance Audit Information Guidelines (Treasury/AG);
- The Social Accounting Matrix (Stats SA).

In skills development, the criteria for measuring performance are starting to reflect in:

- ETQA performance audits; and
- SETA Service Level Agreements (and other current work to clarify the implied impact indicators).

Based on this, SETAs **MUST** cooperate on three levels:

- The Entire Collective – It is crucial that a SETA Governing Council made up of SETA CEOs and funded by the SETA-Collective be established. This council should have a CEO and an office -- perhaps similar to the UK Model -- and it must be tasked with effecting Inter-SETA co-ordination and co-operation;
- SETA Clustering -- Group together SETAs with overlapping areas of knowledge-production (or whatever features make for a cluster); the clusters operate as "Chambers" under the Governing Council and should seek further co-operation across clusters; and
- Individual SETA Co-operation -- On a one-on-one basis as at present e.g. merSETA & FASSET.

We must have a shared understanding of the SETA-Concept – and now is the time.

Sincerely,

**Dr Raymond Patel**  
CEO merSETA

# SETAs speak unequivocally

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni  
& Catherine Maganyele

## *in one Voice*

*The 2009 Inter-SETA conference was held at Gallagher Estate in Johannesburg under the theme “The Power of SETA Synergy for the Transformation of South African Workplace Learning”. The objective was to create synergy to deliver skills development in a more unified way.*

**S**ETAs have always been criticised for being in competition instead of working together. A number of people have lobbied for such a summit long ago and finally their calls fell on eager ears as the first-ever conference was staged in Johannesburg.

All stakeholders in the skills development and training fraternity graced the occasion, which saw SETA CEOs, staff, representatives of the business sector, labour and service providers as well as a Cabinet members put their heads together to map out a new scenario.

In terms of government’s new strategy, SETAs will fall under the new Department of Higher Education whereas in the past they fell under the Department of Labour.

Addressing the conference on the SETA concept: “What can make it work more effectively”, merSETA Chief Executive Officer Dr Raymond Patel said it was “imperative that SETAs rise to the challenge, given the new landscape.”

“Building on the legacy of great South Africans, scientists and technologists of yesteryear, SETAs must continue to rise to the challenge of the Skills Revolution. Since 2000, when SETAs were established, our NSDS targets have largely been focused on numerical achievements, rather than on strategic political objectives, sector priorities and SETA performance,” said Dr Patel.

Sharing the same sentiment, the Minister of Economic Development, Mr Ebrahim Patel, said government was responding with both immediate counter-cyclical measures and policies to improve the structural capacity of the economy to create decent work.

“There is a role that SETAs can play in both these areas, since skills development and training will be a

key means of addressing these two imperatives. A pro-employment growth path must therefore be underpinned by a high and rising skills base, and this requires greater coherence between formal schooling, vocational training and workplace learning.

“It is both the connections between the different dimensions of skills enhancement as well as improving the relevance of what is learnt and how effectively learning is turned into skills, that will make the difference to economic development,” Mr Patel said.

Talking about the change in the SETA landscape, merSETA’s CEO said it was paramount to group together those SETAs with overlapping areas of knowledge-production. He mooted the establishment of a SETA Governing Council made up of SETA CEOs, with an independent CEO and an office, operating similar to a United Kingdom model and tasked with effecting Inter-SETA co-ordination and co-operation.

*Highly interactive commissions covered the following topics:*

- SETA governance and coordination;
- Proactive engagement with the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QTCO);
- Structured input into the National Skills Development Strategy III (NSDS III – 2010-2015);
- How can SETAs become more effective and innovative;
- Developing a comprehensive training and qualification structure for SETA staff from NQF level 4-10; and
- How can greater SETA synergy be achieved?

In conclusion, the Chairman of the Inter-SETA, Mr Max Makhubalo, said SETAs shared a common vision – “skilling the nation and transforming the workplace” –







Clockwise from top: Ansa Liebenberg, Zwelethema Ngayeka and Ester Meyer; merSETA staff assisting delegates at Inter-seta conference.

but had approached the task in piecemeal fashion, with little thought of combining forces.

The summit now heralds a new hope that skills development and training will top the developmental agenda and SETAs will foster the skills development revolution with greater vigour than before.



# Breaking News!

**SETA mandates - extended for one year**

Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, has announced that the mandate of the 23 current SETAs will be extended for one year until March 2011. The National Skills Development Strategy 3, that was to be implemented in April 2010 with the new SETA arrangements, will now only commence in April 2011.

# ***Building and Sustaining Skills in the Manufacturing and Engineering Sectors***

*merSETA, the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Education and Training Authority, is one of 23 SETA's established through the Skills Development Act [no. 97 of 1998]. It facilitates skills development for the metal and engineering, auto manufacturing, motor retail and component manufacturing, tyre manufacturing and plastic sub-sectors.*

## **merSETA services:**

### ***The merSETA Bursary Scheme***

- Bursaries are awarded to students at Universities and Universities of Technology who are studying towards degrees or diplomas within identified scarce skills areas, based on their socio-economic backgrounds and excellent academic results.

### ***Learnerships***

- The merSETA spends much of its discretionary funding on learnership grants for employed and unemployed learners.

### ***Centres of Excellence (ISOE)***

- To address the critical need for welding artisans, the merSETA established Institutes for Sector and Occupational Excellence (ISOE) in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

### ***Career Expos and Exhibitions***

- As a catalyst for youth development, merSETA participates on career expos and career exhibitions throughout the country, promoting the message of skills development to young people across South Africa.

### ***Accelerated Artisan Training Programme (AATP)***

- With the shortage of necessary skills in South Africa, merSETA launched the AATP to accelerate the training of artisans in the manufacturing and engineering sector.

### ***Retrenched Assistance Programme (RAP)***

- As a response to the global economic downturn, merSETA launched the RAP project to help prevent job losses in the manufacturing and engineering sector.



# cturing ctor



### ***Science, Engineering and Technology***

- Building capacity for learners who are interested in embarking on a career in the manufacturing and engineering field.

### ***New Venture Creation***

- 12-month training programme that involves practical and theoretical aspects of running a business. The programme equips the learner with the business skills and tools to start a business.

### ***Recognition of Prior Learning***

- The merSETA supports an approach to RPL that is developmental and recognises that there are different ways to gain knowledge.

### ***Adult Basic Education***

Training and development has no limitation, hence the merSETA support for this noteworthy initiative. Workplace basic education and training is a strategic imperative aimed at increasing the development of skills in the manufacturing, engineering and related services sector.

*leaders in closing the skills gap.*



**merSETA**

MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA

*Mpumalanga & Limpopo Regional Office,*

# Flying the merSETA Flag High

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*Achieve caught up with the Mpumalanga and Limpopo Client Relations Manager, Mr Sabelo Buthelezi, to find out about progress in achieving the region's strategic goals.*

**P**rior to the appointment of Mr Sabelo Buthelezi, management of the regional office was the responsibility of Mr Peter Makaba who established a firm foundation for the success of regional operations. Mr Buthelezi has built considerably on this foundation.

The Mpumalanga and Limpopo Regional office which is situated in Witbank, covers the Highveld and Lowveld in Mpumalanga, up to Limpopo which includes: Polokwane, Venda, Tzaneen, Giyani and neighbouring regions. Amongst other responsibilities and functions, the regional office is responsible for developing and enhancing stakeholder relations throughout Mpumalanga and Limpopo, including relationships with government and non-governmental stakeholders. This entails implementing merSETA strategy in the region, setting up and monitoring regional targets, ensuring that Regional Committees function optimally, participation in the Provincial Skills Development Forum and marketing merSETA as a brand of choice in the region.

According to Mr Buthelezi, having an office in the region is not only a legislative requirement, but is more about taking service to the people. It is about stakeholders having access to merSETA services and products.

The Regional Office has done exceptionally well during the course of the year, which saw Mr Buthelezi scooping the best manager of the quarter award, sending a clear message to other regions of his intentions. His mandate from Parktown Head Office is to meet and exceed the NSDS targets, as this forms an integral part of operations.

“Despite the recession, we have seen the number of our large and medium companies involved in merSETA programmes double over the last two years. The

mandatory grants claims have shown similar trends. “We have not only met but exceeded most of our NSDS targets,” commented Mr Buthelezi. Asked about challenges they face as a region, Mr Buthelezi said that the region covers two provinces that are quite vast and overwhelmingly rural in nature. The involvement of merSETA in small rural towns remains a challenge for the office.

Travelling to these towns stretches limited resources, but despite these challenges merSETA has enacted a number of interventions aimed at accelerating training and skills development. Member companies in the region are participating in apprenticeships, learnerships, skills programmes and experiential learning programmes.

Mr Buthelezi doesn't believe in the office resting on its laurels. He says the office has a long way to go in terms of promoting and facilitating skills development in the region. “We still need to increase participation and promote the merSETA brand in a number of rural towns. Ours is a matter of building the road as we walk, getting sharper as we get closer.” Though he is quite satisfied with the positive response from stakeholders and member companies, he feels they need to compile a customer satisfaction index that will address regional specific issues.

The global downturn has hit the manufacturing and engineering sector hard and job losses in the sector are at an all-time high. However, Mr Buthelezi points to the age-old adage that every cloud has a silver lining.

“While our sub-sectors are not being spared by the global economic crunch, the introduction of the Retrenchee Assistance Programme (RAP) has thrown a lifeline to employers and employees. A number of companies are



*“Despite recession we saw the number of our large and medium companies doubling over two years. The mandatory grants claims have shown similar trends. We have not only met but exceeded most of our NSDS targets”*





starting to breathe more freely and this news has been welcomed by the regional office.

“As soon as the announcement was made, some of our member companies that were on the brink of retrenching their employees applied for and were granted assistance,” Mr Buthelezi said. “Our companies are hard hit by economic recession but I would like to send a message of hope. During this hard time, they need to train even more to prepare for the upswing.”

With the change in the SETA landscape, he sees an opportunity that will force partnerships between SETAs, FETs and Higher Education in order to meet current skills demands and to address future socio-economic and individual aspirations. He is of the view this will end the idea of ivory towers that has been created over the years.

The failure of some SETAs to accelerate the implementation of skills development has left many people frustrated. Mr Buthelezi says there have been reports in different media reflecting criticism of SETAs since their inception. “There has been this public perception about poor performance, administration, financial management and to some extent governance.” He thinks a number of these criticisms emanate from a fundamental misunderstanding of the SETAs role and

purpose. He says it might be true that some SETAs have experienced challenges in a number of ways but he would like to believe that significant progress has been achieved by SETAs, therefore the focus on NSDS III should be about efficiency and effectiveness which will allow SETAs to deliver on the mandate of government.

A number of people in the SETA fraternity, including skills development analysts recommended that the SETA system be aligned with the national industrial policy framework, which is being fine-tuned by the Department of Trade and Industry. Mr Buthelezi believes that training and skills development initiatives must respond to the requirements of the economy, rural development challenges and social integration. Among the goals of the National Industrial Policy Framework is to improve the links between skills development and sector strategies.

Synergy is the most important challenge facing the regional office, according to Mr Buthelezi. In an effort to eliminate the silo mentality the office has developed cordial relationships with both government and the private sector. The office also participates in the Provincial Skills Development Forum for Mpumalanga and Limpopo, holds SDF forums, Provider Forums and meets with Unions active in the province.



Left: Mpumalanga Team: Standing From left to right: Tshikilane Aphane (Client Liaison Officer), Salome Matlala (Client Liaison Coordinator), Michael Mohahabe (ETQA Quality Assuror), Charmaine Sebothoma (Client Liaison Coordinator), Senzo Kunene (Client Liaison Officer) and Semodi Phiri (Senior Client Liaison Coordinator). Seated from left to right: Sarah Phetla (General Office worker), Peter Makaba (Inland Manager), Sabelo Buthelezi (Client Relations Manager) and Phephelaphi Sithole (Receptionist). Below: Peter Makaba & Sabelo Buthelezi.



"I also serve on the steering committee for establishing a Learning Academy in Limpopo. All these efforts provide platforms for building synergy and common understanding in implementing skills development," said Mr Buthelezi.

He took the opportunity to thank all other merSETA divisions working with the region for their unwavering support and thanked his staff for the hard work and dedication they put into their work. The regional management has made it clear that the year 2009 belongs to them and they will be walking to the podium to claim what is rightfully theirs, the Best Region award.

When Mr Makaba took over, the office was in its infancy with only three employees. During his tenure as manager there was an increase in accredited decentralised training centres from zero to six, an increase in the numbers of employers participating in learnerships from two to nine and an increase in the number of employers participating in apprenticeship programmes from 10 to more than 250 to date.

In his new position as Inland Manager, responsible for offices in Mpumalanga and Limpopo, Free State and the Northern Cape, Gauteng South, Gauteng North and the North West, Mr Makaba has a clear vision of the future for the region.

"We want to increase the skills base in order to achieve the provincial growth and development strategy, improve the quality in the provision of training and improve the placement of learners who have completed the new FET qualification. We will also be focusing on making our working relationship with universities more effective and effectively tracking the placement and progress of learners once they have obtained their qualifications."

*"Our companies are hard hit by the economic recession but I would like to send a message of hope. During this hard time, they need to train even more to prepare for the upswing."*



# Highveld Steel and merSETA – **Committed to Tomorrow**

*South Africa's large, well-developed metals industry, based on vast natural resources, represents roughly a third of all South Africa's manufacturing output.*

**T**he metals industry comprises basic iron ore and steel, basic non-ferrous metals and metal products. The iron and steel basic industries involve the manufacture of primary iron and steel products from smelting to semi-finished stages.

Ranked the world's 19th largest steel producing country in 2001, South Africa is the largest steel producer in Africa (almost 60% of Africa's total production).

As one of the most important commercial sectors in South Africa the steel industry must ensure that a new generation of skilled workers is trained to take over the reigns of that industry in the years to come.

Highveld Steel, established in 1966, is one of the company's driving the economic growth of South Africa. It produces steel and vanadium products, ferro-alloys, carbonaceous products and metal containers and closures, and produces ore from its own mine.

Highveld Steel has committed itself to the concept of upskilling employees across its workforce of 2500 workers.

Mr Elijah Nkabinde, Head of Engineering and Training at Highveld Steel, remarked that it is a business imperative to develop skills, not a social 'nice to have', a sentiment increasingly being echoed by business owners across South Africa.



Highveld Steel Plant - Witbank

With 260 unemployed youths from the local community enrolled as apprentices and 25 taking part in the organisation's Production Occupation Skills programme, Highveld is not just paying lip service to the concept of training, but is actively leading the way in preparing a new generation of South Africans for the business challenges of the 21st century.

By virtue of its association with the Steel and Engineering industry in South Africa, Highveld Steel has formed a partnership with merSETA to further the aims of its learnership and apprenticeship programmes.

# Mamelodi SpazAL completes FIFA offices project

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*After fabricating and installing aluminium windows and doors at SAFA House at the FNB stadium during 2009, Sabelo Mkhonto and his Mamelodi SpazAL franchise went on to successfully complete the company's biggest project to date – installing aluminium windows at the seven-storey FIFA Head Office in Sandton Square.*

**T**he job valued at about R800 000 took two months to complete. Mamelodi SpazAL is a sustainable aluminium fabrication & installation business located in Mamelodi.

Proud owner Sabelo says the FIFA project was the culmination of his dreams.

Sabelo started the business with two partners in October 2006 after completing a merSETA Learnership with Wispeco Aluminium. He also completed the New Venture Creation Learnership in 2007, while operating his SpazAL full time.

When Mamelodi SpazAL's first contract earned the company in the region of R66 000 in 2006, Wispeco Institute, which mentors the SpazALs, knew that this small SpazAL was not going to stay small for long.

Today Mamelodi SpazAL is the most successful and fastest growing SpazAL, currently having five permanent employees. "We are very proud of Sabelo and his achievements and look forward to a very bright future for him and his business," says Melissa Botha, the Fabrication Training Manager at the Wispeco Institute.

Wispeco owns the SpazAL franchise concept and each of the small businesses are fully black-owned. Like all other SpazAL franchise owners, Sabelo received his equipment and his vehicle when Wispeco donated cutting machines, crimpers, tools, containers and six Toyota Hilux bakkies to the value of R1.2 million to the SpazAL network.

The current economic downturn has made business challenging, but a commitment to quality and service means that Sabelo Mkhonto and his Mamelodi SpazAL can look forward to a bright future.



Sabelo Mkhonto, owner: Mamelodi SpazAL.

By Theo Garrun

# It's Time to Work Together to Raise Skills Levels\*



Dr Raymond Patel

*Those entrusted with developing skills in the country have a vital task on their hands and need to change their mindset if they want South Africa to compete on a global stage.*

**S**o says **Dr Raymond Patel**, chief executive of the manufacturing, engineering and related services sector education and training authority (merSETA).

Speaking at the Worldskills competition in Calgary, Canada, where Patel was South Africa's official observer, he said it was clear that we spend too much time and effort training the softer skills while what is needed is an emphasis on the trades- and technology-based skills that are sorely needed in our economy.

Calgary was the venue for the 40th Worldskills competition at which 15 young South Africans were competing against the best that the world can offer.

As far as the competition is concerned, Patel says it is clear that we do not prepare our competitors nearly as thoroughly as the other countries do. "The lesson is that we need to start earlier in identifying our top young people in each of the categories and we need to put more thought and planning into getting them ready."

To do that, Patel believes Worldskills South Africa can no longer be the property of just two SETAs - merSETA and the Services SETA.

"We need to get the buy-in of everyone concerned - educational institutions, industry partners and all the SETAs,"

The problem, he believes, starts in the schools. He says he was "blown away" by the concept of "try-a-skill" that was on display at Worldskills and that was visited during the week by every Grade 9 and 10 pupil in Canada's Alberta province.

"Our career guidance education is very poor. We think we can deal with these issues by handing out pamphlets. What we saw here was learners having the job explained to them and then being given the opportunity to actually practice the skills required in a practical setting," he said.

"We have to get the message out that becoming an artisan is a prestigious occupation. Too many of our young people believe they are above getting their hands dirty. They think they can take shortcuts to becoming wealthy and unfortunately our education system trends to perpetuate that.

Patel concedes that the standards of teaching of maths

*"We have to get the message out that becoming an artisan is a prestigious occupation. Too many of our young people believe they are above getting their hands dirty."*

and science in our schools is a problem. "We are not turning out enough matrics who qualify for a technical education," he says. "It starts with the teachers and we need, as matter of urgency, to upgrade their skills and to adequately reward those who are doing a good job.

"Thereafter, it's up to those of us who are responsible for skills training to attract the brightest of our young people into the technical professions and to train them to world standards. That's the lesson of Worldskills."





merSETA Team Management: Mr Tom Mkhwanazi (General Manager: Corporate Governance), Dr Raymond Patel (Chief Executive Officer), Mr Derrick Peo (General Manager: Projects), Ms Beaula Dziruni (Chief Executive Officer), Mr Wayne Adams (Chief Operating Officer), Ms Mocketenyana Mayongo (General Manager: Corporate Services)

# merSETA receives Best Employers™ Award

*The Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (merSETA) has been recognised by the Corporate Research Foundation (CRF) as one of the best employers for 2009/10.*

**T**he aim of the annual BEST Employers™ awards is to identify, accredit and celebrate South African companies with a demonstrable track record of best practice in the field of talent management.

According to Samantha Crous, General Manager at the Corporate Research Foundation, companies that participate in the annual Certification project are recognised as 'intelligent employers' due to their active and passionate development of the employer brand.

The results of judging are based on scientific, comparative HR best practice data that is provided by the project data that is also responsible for identifying and accrediting South Africa's BEST Employers™ each year.

Asked about the criteria used in the process, Ms Rose Setshego from the Marketing Communications Division at CRF said: "The research process is segmented according to the following HR related aspects: Organisational Strategy, the HR Function, the Leadership of the Company, Communication, Diversity management, Corporate Social Responsibility, Knowledge Management, Talent Management and

Employee Engagement, Employee Training and Development, Performance Management and Rewards and Recognition."

Only companies who achieve 40% of the maximum achievable score in terms of the HR Benchmark™ can be accredited and ultimately publicly recognised by CRF. By giving employees a clear picture of what they can expect, employers can gain support and loyalty in return. An engaged workforce is critical to weathering the economic storm currently challenging business in South Africa.

Partners with CRF this year include the Institute of People Management (IPM), SA Institute of Management (SAIM), Businesswomen's Association of South Africa (BWASA), Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut (AHI), UCT Graduate School of Business, HR Future and DMSA. Business Report is the official media partner.



# ISO Certification – merSETA Joins an Elite

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*When products, systems, machinery and devices work well and safely, it is often because they meet standards. And the organisation responsible for many thousands of the standards which benefit the world is ISO, the International Organisation for Standardisation. merSETA has recently been awarded ISO certification, ensuring that its processes conform to the very highest global standards. Achieve Newsletter spoke to Mr Kgomotso Ntsoko, the merSETA Quality Assurance Manager about the ISO certification.*

**N**ot only did merSETA meet but it also exceeded the NSDS targets by scoring a resounding 4.53 out of 5, it was voted one of the best employers for 2009/10 and now it has been certified by ISO.

*To what do you ascribe all these successes?*

I think the merSETA is in a class of its own and I ascribe the success to the merSETA top management giving all of us the support and direction to ensure that ISO certification became a reality. Top management have demonstrated their belief that the staff employed during the process were the best people for the job and that they were committed to achieving success. Success is not the key to happiness, happiness is the key to success and because the merSETA staff love what they are doing they managed to ensure that merSETA exceeded the NSDS target set, has now been recognised as one of the best employers for 2009/10 and recently certified to ISO 9001:2008, what an achievement!

*Could you tell us why the ISO certificate is so important to the merSETA?*

In today's business environment, organisations are operating in a global arena where systems are aligned with the international requirements of ISO. Customer satisfaction, profitability and market leadership are driven to a large extent by delivering quality products and services to customers. Today, more than ever, there is a worldwide trend towards increasingly stringent customer expectations regarding quality. Accompanying this trend has been a growing realisation that continuous quality improvements are often necessary in achieving and sustaining excellent economic performance.

*How significant is this award to merSETA?*

This award is very significant to us as an organisation considering the size and scope of merSETA operations, for example, the number of regional offices across South Africa and the stakeholders that we service. The award is a confirmation that quality is everyone's responsibility within merSETA. During the course of the certification process every staff member took action to make quality

part of their daily responsibility and showed commitment and excellence in the quest for world class quality. The processes and procedures merSETA has set in place which led to the awarding of this certification will benefit the organisation in a number of ways; I'd like to talk about just a few of these. We will immediately benefit through increased effectiveness and efficiency in the use of the merSETA's resources. By following ISO guidelines merSETA will be able to reduce process time and enjoy the efficiency brought about by consistent processes. The integration and alignment of these processes will best achieve the organisations' desired strategic results. merSETA will be able to identify and document quality management processes and procedures for better process control flow and traceability of records at the time where they are required. Through these processes we will be empowered to make much more informed management decisions and we will also see an improvement in employee morale, brought about by a knowledge of defined roles and responsibilities, accountability of management, established systems, and perhaps most importantly, a clear picture of how their roles affect quality and the overall success of merSETA.

The ISO processes and procedures will mean better supplier relationships through a thorough evaluation of new suppliers and consistency with respect to how and with whom orders are placed. It will also mean consistency through defining, outlining, documenting and streamlining all processes to ensure that, to use just one example, whatever activity is performed in the merSETA Western Cape Regional Office is the same as at the Mpumalanga & Limpopo Regional Office. One of the most important changes will be improved customer satisfaction through merSETA employees continually exceeding quality service requirements. "There's an old business adage that says that if you can't measure something you can't improve on it. The processes that ISO puts in place means that we can look forward to continuous improvement of operational processes and systems by conducting internal and external audits and management reviews, it also makes us more open to suggestions from staff members and stakeholders.

# Club



Left: Dr Raymond Patel, Adri du Plessis: Certification Manager (PriceWaterhouseCoopers Governance & Sustainability) and Kgomoiso Ntsoko. Right: Kgomoiso Ntsoko – Quality Assurance Manager.

### *How much work has gone into ensuring that merSETA got the Certification?*

Well, it all started with the decision by merSETA management and the board to implement and get certified to ISO 9001:2008. The decision was made around November 2007 and the whole process began in February 2008. From the beginning top management commitment was demonstrated through making the resources available for the project to kick off, setting up of a committee of process owners, communicating and getting the buy-in from staff, a process we believe has been extremely successful. The next step was for the Learning, Education, Training and Quality Assurance (LETQA) division responsible for this process to get the working committee together to constantly meet and review the progress and establish action plans to steer the process until all the identified processes were all in place. The documented procedures/policies were

issued dated 28th August 2009 and officially handed to merSETA management on the 16th October 2009. The certificate is valid until 27th August 2012 subject to surveillance assessment, so from the above process it is clear as to how much work was put in getting the merSETA ISO 9001:2008 compliant.

### *Any message you would like to convey to merSETA management, staff, stakeholders and clients?*

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the merSETA board for all the support they have given to the management in making the process a success. The recognition we have received would certainly not have been possible without this support. This support has been universal through every level of the organisation. Once again, we would like to thank and express our appreciation to the merSETA management whose guidance, dedication, commitment, support to all staff were indispensable in the achievement of this great honour. Without their ensuring that resources were made available at every step of the process we would not have achieved success. We would also like to applaud and give special recognition to all the merSETA staff for embracing the concept of a new quality management system, their support and their commitment has been invaluable.

*“I think the merSETA is in a class of its own”*

then approved by top management for implementation and ensured that all the departments and staff members implemented and adhered to the quality procedures/policies as documented and approved. We ensured that all divisions implemented the identified processes. We kept an eye on this through internal monitoring and auditing of our processes, identifying gaps and taking corrective actions in identifying the root causes of any problems, investigating and putting plans in place to correct the internally identified non conformances.

While we were conducting the auditing and monitoring processes we identified PriceWaterhouseCoopers as the right service provider to assess and certify the merSETA quality management system in July 2008. The merSETA was given 90 days allowance to clear all the areas of non conformity to the accepted standard and this was verified by PriceWaterhouseCoopers on the 3rd and 4th August 2009 and the certificate was

It is through teamwork that this success has been achieved and I urge all staff to take the achievement a step further by ensuring continuous improvement of the quality management system through giving suggestions in this regard. We would also like to recognise the service provider PriceWaterhouseCoopers who were the assessment and certification body. Their consultants were very professional in providing the merSETA with not only consultation services but guidance, support and motivation. As merSETA we are happy to be in partnership with a service provider of their calibre and look forward to a long lasting relationship of leadership in closing the skills gap. As merSETA's business continues to grow and succeed in closing the skills gap, we believe the long-term success of the merSETA depends on understanding and acting in response to the needs of our stakeholders. merSETA as an organisation is in existence to serve and exceed the needs of our stakeholders. ISO 9001:2008



# Venturing into the future - hope for entrepreneurs

By Own Correspondent

*With more resources being allocated to ensure that young people are upskilled, the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (merSETA) remains convinced that it is positioned to play an important part in the reconstruction and development of South African society.*

**A**mong the interventions merSETA has recently undertaken is the introduction of the New Venture Creation Project. It is a 12-month training programme that involves practical and theoretical aspects of running a business. The programme equips the learner with the skills and tools to successfully start a business.

According to Mr Owen Steyn, the Project Manager the aim of the project is to put all young learners (potential entrepreneurs) in a position to effectively capitalise on opportunities to start and grow sustainable businesses.

85% of employers contributing levies to the merSETA are small enterprises, 10% are medium and 5% are large. It is well documented that small enterprises, whilst being by far the largest employing body and driver of economic growth, have the greatest risk in maintaining a sustainable presence.

This project addresses one element of the merSETA 10-Point SME Support Programme – i.e. to stimulate and support the incubation of small enterprises in the engineering sector through the implementation of the New Venture Creation (NVC) learnership. Implementation of the learnership alone does not guarantee success. The new ventures will therefore also be linked to the broader SME support programmes offered by the project office as these fledgling businesses enter the formal economy.

*Some of these initiatives include:*

- Dedicated Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) support to continue skills training beyond business registration;
- Subsidised training support;
- Business advisory support from the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) – a Department of Trade & Industry initiative;
- Promotion of market access initiatives; and
- Promotion of access to business expansion funding opportunities.

Over the years merSETA has invested heavily in small enterprises programmes. People eligible to take part in the project are learners who demonstrate the potential and aptitude to start and run a business. The key target is young unemployed black people under the age of 35, as well as females and disabled people.

Recently, 30 women from Limpopo started with the New Venture Creation Learnership as they are planning to open SpazALs (franchised sustainable aluminium fabrication & installation businesses) in their area. Wispeco Aluminium provides them with training on how to make aluminium windows and door systems.

Mr Steyn visited Wispeco to meet the women and encourage them to work hard on their journey to become successful entrepreneurs.



Mr Owen Steyn (Far right) with beneficiaries of the NVC project.

## *“merSETA envisages training and mentoring 1080 young people to form sustainable new ventures”*

“merSETA envisages training and mentoring 1080 young people to form sustainable new ventures -- at least 70% of these new ventures should still be in operation 12 months after completion of the programme by March 2010. The merSETA subsidises the training intervention in the form of a Learnership grant which covers the cost of the theoretical and practical training and an allowance which covers travel,” says Mr Steyn.

After completion of the 12-month learnership, partnerships with organisations like SEDA are formed, providing additional funding, mentoring and incubation to help them with their new ventures.

Asked about the importance and sustainability of the project, Mr Steyn commented that it is, “Aimed and designed to establish an entrepreneurship qualification

that breaks down and addresses the administrative and behavioural barriers that contribute to failures in starting and sustaining a new business by building new ventures with established businesses”.

Some project initiatives include promotion of market access and promotion of access to business expansion funding opportunities.

*For more information, contact Mr Owen Steyn at (011) 551 5202 or email [osteyn@merseta.org.za](mailto:osteyn@merseta.org.za)*

# SET Fighting the “Chronic” Skills Shortage

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*The shortage of engineers in South Africa is no longer a challenge, but rather a national crisis. Statistics show that the United States of America produces 380 engineers per million people, China 225, India 95 and South Africa only 45. This is extremely worrying.*

**T**he issue is not one which concerns only the government or private sector, but rather calls for all institutions and organisations in South Africa to join forces to help cure this chronic shortage of skills in our country. After recognising this national crisis, merSETA has come up with the Science, Engineering and Technology Project (SET), a project that aims to develop a strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology capacity-building amongst schools in the FET sector.

Mr Azwifaneli Tshisikamulilo, the SET Project Manager at merSETA, elaborated on the project.

“We want to create a pool of learners who are willing to take up maths and science as subjects of choice and offer them extra classes on these subjects. Learners are identified and absorbed in the project and filtered into various merSETA outreaches; namely in the areas of Bursaries, Accelerated Artisan Training and other programmes.”

According to Mr Tshisikamulilo 900 learners from grade 10–12 are currently participating on the project. These learners are from the Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

The project is expected to attract more learners from all the provinces. Asked about the chances of expanding the project to other provinces, Mr Tshisikamulilo says it will depend on the success of this pilot project, taking into account the challenges and finding a way of addressing them. Mr Tshisikamulilo says the project has attracted interest from the NGO’s, CBO’s and Institutions of Higher Learning.

merSETA has a dedicated Project Manager and Regional staff members who assist learners in their efforts to obtain further learning to close the skills gap in the manufacturing and engineering sector.

Wits Education School, South African Women in Engineering and Star Schools are the institutions that have partnered with merSETA to ensure this project becomes a success.

*“We want to create a pool of learners who are willing to take up maths and science as subjects of choice.”*

The pilot project is expected to run till the end of December 2009.

Mr Tshisikamulilo encouraged learners willing to embark on a career in the manufacturing and engineering sector to take maths and science seriously, as merSETA has put in place resources and support structures to help them succeed in this field.





# Driven by Passion & Fortitude

By Sibongiseni Zinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*The seeming reluctance of young people to take the motor industry to another level is of serious concern, as this manufacturing sector is one of South Africa's most important.*

**W**ith the existing motor industry workforce approaching retirement age, their imminent departure will leave a void. Having seen such a possibility, BMW SA afforded learner Annah Pilusa an opportunity to take the industry forward.

The passing away of her Mother and Father didn't stop Annah from pursuing her dreams. As John D. Wright put it, life is like a bicycle, either you keep moving or you fall down and in keeping with this philosophy she decided to use the tragedy as motivation. She matriculated at Gerson High school in 2004; unfortunately her extended family didn't have money for her to study further. Instead of reflecting on the unfairness of life, in 2006 Annah decided to apply to merSETA for a learnership.

After rigorous interviews and assessments, she achieved success. She was afforded an opportunity to do a merSETA funded learnership at Ekurhuleni West College, studying towards a qualification as a motor mechanic, NQF level 1. After completing her learnership, she applied for an apprenticeship at BMW SA in Sandton and she was granted an opportunity to be an apprentice. Annah says that as an apprentice, you have to work harder than ever before.

"Unlike a learnership, apprenticeship is more intense, it requires you to double your effort. During an apprenticeship you learn something today and tomorrow you write about it, whilst in a learnership, you learn something today and you will only be assessed in three or four months later, so the pressure is much greater"

Annah is currently a motor mechanic NQF Level 2 apprentice. She says working in a male dominated field can be a daunting prospect at times, but she is not intimidated. at all, "when I started here, my colleagues were not at ease with the fact that I will be working with them, but they are fine now" she says. Paving the way for other women, she has set her sights on an ambitious goal, which is to be a service advisor.

"I enjoy working with a person of Annah's calibre, she is hard working, she follows instructions and if she doesn't understand she asks, Annah has passion and

the potential to be the best motor mechanic ever, she must just keep on working very hard and learn all the time" says her mentor, Mr Thomas Malatja. He also said people like Annah will definitely be the answer to the crisis of skills shortage in our country.

The shortage of artisans in South Africa has seen demand exceeding the supply. Manny de Canha, CEO of Associated Motor Holdings, an Imperial Holdings subsidiary, says for every 1255 new cars sold, one apprentice is taken on in the motor industry. He says that ideally this ratio should be at a level of 400 cars to one apprentice in order to ensure adequate vehicle maintenance and servicing. Statistics indicate that Canada, Australia and New Zealand are targeting qualified and experienced service and repair mechanics and technicians for recruitment in South Africa, a worrying trend.

Asked about the relationship between BMW SA and merSETA, Mr Bryan Fernandez, the After Sales Manager at BMW, says the relationship started in 2003 and it has improved by leaps and bounds over the years. Mr Fernandez could not hide his passion for apprenticeships. "I try and instil in all of them the same enthusiasm for commitment and dedication to their studies and create opportunities for them daily."

## **BMW SA currently has 11 apprentices on its books.**

Annah's message to other aspiring young women who want to follow in her footsteps, is to maintain discipline, and know that being a motor mechanic requires physical and mental strength.

It is through people like Annah that we can be able to dispel the myth that only men can be motor mechanics. The fact that South Africa is not producing enough artisans and engineers should serve as an inspiration to young women. Annah's entry into this demanding field means that things are changing. "The fact is that there's no glitz and glamour in engineering, but it is a fulfilling and exciting field to venture into" concluded Annah.





*“The fact is that there’s no glitz and glamour in engineering, but it is a fulfilling and exciting field to venture into.”*



# Poised & Prepared

## - Thanks to merSETA

By Own Correspondent

*It is rare in this day and age of fads and shallow consumerism to meet a young lady that has her priorities completely in order, who has overcome obstacles through sheer force of personality and who does it all with a smile and a sense of self deprecating humour. Zanele Nkomo is just such a young woman.*

**C**urrently completing her third year of a degree in Mechanical Engineering at University of Johannesburg (UJ), merSETA bursary holder Zanele comes across as supremely self confident, as well she should.

Zanele who turns 21 on the 16th of November (coincidentally when she writes her final third year exam) has overcome challenges that would daunt an older, more experienced person. When she was nine years old, Zanele Nkomo's father passed away. Leaving the care of the family to her mother, a burden that she was happy to bear, but which placed immense strains on the family, both financially and psychologically. She quotes Martin Luther Jnr: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge."

However, in the face of adversity, Joburg' girl Zanele prospered. During her matric year she was made a prefect at Sunward Park High School, chaired the public speaking "trophy team", was a recipient of the Lion's Cup Trophy and won numerous academic awards, including one for drama. Today she boasts a record of academic excellence and finds that her chosen field, Mechanical Engineering, challenges both her intellect and her sense of social justice. Mechanical engineers combine sound knowledge of the physical and engineering science with ingenuity to create the mechanical devices and systems essential to almost every industry and every phase of technological advancement. A wide variety of career opportunities are available to mechanical engineers.

They may work in such diverse areas as transportation, nuclear, solar and fossil fuel, energy development and utilisation, mining and earth moving equipment, heating and air-conditioning, air and water pollution control, metals and materials, or even in the development

of orthopaedic surgical implants. In many of these areas, mechanical engineers are also employed in research to establish and develop operating principles of mechanisms, devices and systems.

Many mechanical engineers find careers in manufacturing industries. In the automotive industries, for example, they are involved in the design, development, fabrication, assembly and maintenance of engines, transmissions, chassis, bodies and suspension systems.

As the sole female in a class of 50, her academic career has honed her sense of where women fit within South African society. However, she is adamant that she asks no favour in what is traditionally a male dominated field. "My mother is my inspiration, strong and determined. She is the one who planted the seeds of my belief that women need to stand up for themselves. We need to fight and empower ourselves, not ask for recognition from men. We don't need permission to be equal, we are equal," says Zanele. "The guiding principle of my life has been to push against adversity, if adversity throws up a seemingly immovable roadblock find a way to walk around it."

*"I feel that big business and corporates need to do more."*

In order to promote greater interaction between big business and students, she helped establish the Student Business Association, where Directors of large corporations are invited to speak, bursaries are actively sought for those in need and company visits are arranged. She currently serves as vice





merSETA Bursary holder Zanele Nkomo with her car model.

chairperson of the association. She commented: “The association is a way for students like myself to interact in a meaningful way with big business and build bridges that will help shape the society of tomorrow.”

Her love of mechanical engineering stems, in part from the broadness of the field, from component design to automotive engineering. She dreams of revolutionising the way technology is perceived and used. When approached on the subject of how to introduce engineering to South Africa’s rural communities and learners, she has advice for South African business: “I feel that big business and corporates need to do more in terms of offering programmes that will reach out to people in the rural areas. They need to supply information and market the engineering industry vigorously.”

Zanele laughingly states that her favourite piece of technology is her cell phone “of course.” Zanele says women still feel need to be empowered, but it’s time women empower themselves. merSETA is proud to play its part in making the dreams and aspirations of this young learner come true and will continue to play its part in making the dreams of South Africa’s youth a reality.





# Auto Sector, Navigating the Storm

By Ed Richardson & Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*More than 3500 international and local delegates descended on Port Elizabeth early in October to attend the South African Automotive Week (SAAW).*

**T**his is the third year that the SAAW has been held in the city, which has become known as the “Detroit of Africa”.

Under the theme, “Navigating the storm: A roadmap to vision 2020 conference”, the conference aimed to provide a forum for delegates to access new markets throughout the world, establish partnerships and cement deals with business on the continent, network with key role-players with significant purchasing power in the auto sector, consolidate relationships with original equipment manufacturers and/or after-market decision-makers and gain first-hand knowledge and analyses of the South African auto industry and global trends.

Mr Andrew Binning, the Director of South African Automotive Week, described the SAAW as the premier auto supplier showcase and conference in South Africa.

“Over 11% of exhibitors polled did deals to the value in excess of R500 000, while an additional 26% estimate the value of their agreements between R50 000 and R500 000.”

The main sponsors of SAAW 2009 were merSETA, the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs, the Eastern Cape Department of Transport, the Eastern Cape Development Corporation, the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality and The Coega Development Corporation.

“The biggest challenge was finding a suitable venue in Port Elizabeth. In one of the first partnerships of its kind, a Port Elizabeth shopping centre hosted an

international trade show and convention,” says Andrew Binning. The national event – the second biennial South African Automotive Week (SAAW) – is one of the biggest of its kind in the country, and has outgrown existing conference and convention facilities in Port Elizabeth. But the organisers wanted to keep SAAW in the Eastern Cape, which is the home of the South African automotive industry.

SAAW is the only automotive industry event in 2009 supported by all the major sector bodies – the National Association of Automotive Component and Allied Manufacturers, the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa, the Retail Motor Industry Group (RMI), and the Automotive Industry Development Centre.

*“Over 11% of exhibitors polled did deals to the value in excess of R500 000.”*

The challenges facing the industry were addressed at a number of forums and discussion groups during the automotive conference.

Addressing delegates, merSETA Chief Operations Officer Mr Wayne Adams said: “The international community is currently plagued by the global economic disturbances. This economic meltdown, that became apparent in November last year, has hit our sector hardest – and merSETA had to embark on a radical





Counter clockwise from top: Delegates at SAAW; Electric car; Ms Meketenyana Mayongo and Mr Wayne Adams from merSETA.

refocus of its priorities to ensure the auto sector as well as the steel manufacturing and motor retail and component manufacturers could weather the storm.”

Mr Adams went on to say that merSETA had made R80 million available for the Retrenchee Assistance Plan (RAP) which assists companies and business facing downscaling in these harsh times.

Under this plan, merSETA makes money available for further training rather than retrenchment so that when the economy is revitalised, workers can return to full productivity. This is a ground-breaking initiative and heralds a new and exciting era of intervention by government-supported institutions.

“The Province of the Eastern Cape is the Detroit of Africa – it is where the automotive industry is highly concentrated and it is incumbent upon us as various role-players to reposition this important sector of our economy in order to weather the storm of the global economic environment and continue to play a vital role in local economic development and decent job creation,” Eastern Cape MEC for Transport, Safety and Liaison Ghishma Barry said during the discussions.

“Government is always willing to assist this sector of our economy and the acceleration of the revamp of public transport, logistics system and related infrastructure is one of Provincial Government’s Eight Strategic Priorities in order to attract more investment,” she added.

# Closing the Skills Gap in Venda

By Own Correspondent

*You could have been mistaken for thinking that this was just another political rally. In fact, the reality was even more exciting. It was the merSETA and I Can Foundation staging yet another exciting career expo in Thohoyandou, Venda.*

**T**he career expo, which attracted more than 800 learners from grade 9 – grade 12 exposed the youth to different career options available in the manufacturing and engineering sector.

merSETA General Manager, Corporate Services, Ms Moketenyana Mayongo said that young people needed to have a vision of their own future and the will power to realise their full potential. She further urged young people to make use of all the opportunities available to them in order to ensure that they become better citizens.

Motivational speakers fired the imagination of teachers and learners alike, who listened attentively to the messages of hope and inspiration. Different career options in various sectors were outlined and by the expressions of the youth attending the expo many new futures were contemplated.

Taking into account the challenges faced by learners entering higher education merSETA has embarked on rigorous career exhibitions throughout the country to help young people in their quest to choose relevant careers based on what the job market requires. This is a first step in assisting learners who aspire to take up careers in the manufacturing and engineering field.

merSETA has pledged to contribute in a meaningful way to career guidance, in line with its policies to equip young people with the information they require to make the correct decisions in their career development . merSETA has also promised financial assistance through the merSETA bursary scheme. Just as merSETA has reached out to the youth, it is expected that the youth will fulfil their part of the bargain through taking advantage of the services offered by merSETA.



Learners at Career Exhibition in Venda.



# merSETA and Cell C Take to the Rural Areas

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

*Thousands of learners participated in the Cell C Career Choice Expo in seven provinces in August and October, at which merSETA participated!*

**T**he majority of young people leave school with only a vague knowledge of employment opportunities and with little insight as to the most appropriate career direction for their abilities, interests and personality. Asked about the objective of the career expo, Ms Nobuntu Lange, the Corporate Social Investment Specialist at Cell C said the expo was aimed at Grade 9 -12 learners living in our country's remote rural areas.

"We expose them to available career and learning opportunities that many of them may not necessarily have been aware of." This was the third year that the Career Choice Expo has been held and this year saw the participation of more than 100 companies. The Career Choice Expo has been successful in directly reaching over 20 000 Grade 9 to 12 learners living in rural communities.

Ms Lange attributed the success of the project to the positive cooperation the organisation has received from

local community leaders, who they engaged through the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA).

"The lack of proper career guidance to learners is a serious setback to our future leaders," said Mr Andile Mabuza, the LO Educator in KwaZulu Natal. "Our kids are thumb sucking their career choices, hence the high dropout rates at our tertiary institutions."

With the proper implementation of Career Guidance in our schools, results will improve drastically. Closing the skills gap will be a living legacy of the seed sowed by organisations such as merSETA and Cell C.

Provinces which hosted the event were Mpumalanga, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Free State, North West and the Northern Cape.



Learners at Cell C Career Choice Expo in North West.



General Manager Corporate Governance, Tom Mkhwanazi, MC at the AGM.

# merSETA gets an A+

By Own Correspondent

*The annual report of the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (merSETA) was officially released on Friday, September 18, 2009 at a glittering Annual General Meeting held at the Johannesburg Country Club.*

**D**elivering a keynote address at the function, which was themed “drumming up support for skills development”, merSETA Chairperson Ms Jeanne Esterhuizen said this financial year had seen merSETA engaging actively in the country’s economic, social and environmental development by developing the skills of 23 762 people. She went on to say the number of learners and apprentices released to the sector as qualified artisans and employees was 7891, while 6778 small and medium enterprises had received assistance from the merSETA.

She commented that the merSETA has a tremendously talented board and for this reason was able to respond today’s economic challenges. Ms Esterhuizen said: “Put together intelligent minds and a shared vision and it is amazing what you can achieve.” She further lauded the merSETA staff for making a significant contribution within the skills development fraternity.

Presenting his third year annual report since taking over the reigns at merSETA, the Chief Executive Officer, Dr Raymond Patel, lamented the failure of SETAs to communicate their successes to the broader society. He said the economic meltdown has hit the sector the hardest - and the merSETA has had to embark on a radical refocus of its priorities to ensure the auto sector, the steel manufacturing and the motor retail and component manufactures could weather the storm.

This was the sixth year in succession since the inception of SETAs in 2000 that merSETA’s annual results were unqualified. Dr Patel attributed this achievement to the Governing Board, which made sound interventions on skills development issues.

Amongst the successes the merSETA recorded during this financial year were the opening of the new office in Pretoria, responsible for providing assistance to our

member companies operating in Pretoria and North West respectively, and its positive impact on small and medium enterprises. More than 6 700 SMEs have benefited from merSETA intervention on the training front during the year. merSETA also hosted its first ever national skills conference in February.

With the economic crunch, the merSETA made R80 million available for the Retrenched Assistance Plan (RAP) which assists companies and business facing downscaling.

The introduction of a key project that further entrenches merSETA’s record of success was the expansion of the Accelerated Artisan Training Programme.

*“These were merSETA’s best results since its launch in 2000”*

Other key indicators of the health of the organisation were a healthy financial status and a great improvement in its performance by scoring 4,53 out of 5 and thus exceeding the National Skills Development Strategy targets.

Like a fine wine that only gets better as it matures, merSETA has once more proved that it is a leader in closing the skills gap.

“Unequivocally these were merSETA’s best results since its launch in 2000,” concluded Dr Patel.





Client Liason Officer, Victor Nonyane advising learners on different career options.

# merSETA takes to the township

**m**erSETA heeded the call to participate in the Mogale City Career Day held at Thutolefa Secondary School in Munsieville, Krugersdorp. The career day attracted more than 1370 learners. The objective of the exhibition was to empower learners by providing them with information and guidance that will help them make an informed career choice.

Private sector companies, public sector representatives and other institutions graced the occasion.

One of the learners, Thembi Motaung, had this to say: "I am so excited to be a part of this career expo. Speakers gave us information on different career choices and it is up to us to make up our minds on what we want to do." The exhibition targeted grades 8-12 and unemployed youth.

Ms Lesego Mamathuba, the career expo organiser, was in a jovial mood when asked about the success and

the impact of the career day. She said the day provides learners with an opportunity to meet the industry players and get to know which careers are in demand in different sectors of our economy.

Mamathuba added that merSETA needs to further preach the gospel of career guidance, and emphasises South Africa's needs as far as critical and scarce skills are concerned, so that learners will be able to make well informed decisions when choosing careers.

From all of us at "Operation Closing the Skills Gap", we would like to wish all our matriculants well during their exams and please do join the family again next year when we continue with our efforts to close the skills gap in SA.

# Help us make **Achieve** magazine even better

*In order to make Achieve magazine even better, we want our readers to give us feedback on its content and design. Please supply your details as follows:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tel no: \_\_\_\_\_ Code: ( \_\_\_\_ ) Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Do you receive the Achieve Newsletter? If so, how do you receive it? \_\_\_\_\_

**What sort of articles would you like to see more of?**  
*(You can tick more than one)*

- Success stories.
- Details of programmes offered by merSETA.
- Stories about South African business.
- Interviews with merSETA management.
- Opinion pieces.
- Short news items.
- Feature stories.
- 'How to' stories

**Which is your favourite section of the publication?**

- SETA News.
- Features.
- Projects.
- Success stories.
- Events.

**What sort of visual material would you like to see in Achieve magazine?**

- Photographs of functions and events.
- Photographs of successful people.
- Photographs of projects.
- A cartoon?
- Reader submissions.

**I currently find \_\_\_\_\_ of the articles relevant to my interests.**

- 0%
- Between 1% and 20%
- Between 20% and 40%
- Between 40% and 60%
- Between 60% and 80%
- More than 80%

**Do you find the writing in Achieve magazine:**

- Much too technical.
- A little complicated.
- Just about right.
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**Any comments/suggestions:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
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## WIN an iPod Nano!

Stand a chance to win an iPod Nano by simply completing and faxing this form to 086 673 0004, emailing it to [achieve@merseta.org.za](mailto:achieve@merseta.org.za) or posting it to: Marketing & Communications Department, PO Box 61826, Marshalltown, 2107. **CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES into the draw is 8 February 2010.**

**Terms & Conditions:**

The judges decision is final. No correspondence may be entered into. Only one entry per person. The prize is not transferable for cash. The competition is not open to employees of merSETA, their immediate families or of Tenaka's Tribe Productions. Achieve reserves the right to publish the name and photograph of the winner. The prize is open to South African residents only. The first name will be selected at random, by an independent body, after 8 February 2010. The winner will be notified telephonically. Allow 14 days for delivery of prize.





# VIP NOTICE:

## VIP uptake NECESSITATES PRIORITISATION

*The merSETA Voucher Implementation Project, aimed at boosting training for small and medium enterprise employees, has been temporarily placed on hold to fast-track current applications.*

merSETA General Manager: Projects Mr Derrick Peo says there has been a flood of applications for the VIP, which aims to boost SME competitiveness and productivity through training for employees.

“Due to the flood of applications – and given the opportunity the VIP presents to the sector – we are now focusing on processing applications for small businesses,” says Mr Peo.

*With immediate effect, merSETA is implementing the following:*

- Vouchers older than 30 days and not authorised will be cancelled and funding re-allocated;
- Vouchers issued before 28 February 2009 and not yet invoiced will be cancelled;
- Voucher validity will be reduced to three months.

The merSETA has embarked on these measures to ensure that the organisation is using stakeholder funds to make the most impact and that we manage the training process more carefully. The project objective is short, quality training.

“Let us work together to ensure that decision makers are given accurate, reliable information, to inform their decisions,” says Mr Peo.

Before further funding is proposed, the VIP system is also undergoing a clean-up to remove backlogs. A comprehensive report with recommendations for fine-tuning the next phase of the project will be provided to the Governing Board towards the end of November.

**leaders in closing the skills gap.**

[www.merseta.org.za](http://www.merseta.org.za)



**merSETA**

MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA

ISO 9001:2008



# 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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