



**merSETA honours
cream of the crop**

**WE SPEAK TO NEW
CHAIRPERSON** - Jeanne Esterhuizen

**merSETA's NEW COO -
devoted to excellence**



merSETA

MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA

VISION

MERSETA, 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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talking notes

In September, the merSETA undertook to honour the cream of the crop in training and development across the country. These are companies that have a proven track record of successful participation in skills development; they have, through a shared vision, aided the merSETA in reaching two thirds of its service level agreements with the National Department of Labour. In the same breath, we reflected on targets we have achieved in the previous financial year.

Through our numerous exhibitions across the country, we were able to engage with learners and influence their career choice. The aim is to encourage scholars to take up careers in the scarce skills sectors, and we are looking to strengthen this form of career pathing by engaging deeper with career guidance teachers at school level. This relationship will ensure that learners are exposed to training and development opportunities in the manufacturing and engineering sector.

As we approach World Aids Day and 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children, let us spare a thought in remembrance of our brothers and sisters who have fallen prey to HIV/AIDS.

We trust that you, our valued stakeholder, will enjoy this latest instalment of our newsletter. Have a blessed festive season.



a view from the top

This edition comes just after we celebrated with stakeholders our wonderful achievements during the last financial year (2007-2008). Also during this period we celebrated our outstanding milestone of 108% of targets achieved. The merSETA has also recognised more than 355 merSETA levy-paying companies at the Top Training Companies awards - all this coinciding with the merSETA choosing a new Chairperson, Jeanne Esterhuizen, and Deputy Chairperson, Xolani Tshayana.

The merSETA congratulates and wishes the two Board members well in their respective positions.

In this edition I would like to focus on what makes the merSETA such a heavenly place to work for. Those of you who read Ravi Subramanian's books *If God was a Banker* and *I Bought the Monk's Ferrari* are surely familiar with the good and bad nature of our corporate government and parastatal environment. The question is: are SETAs really as hellish as the media purports them to be? My immediate response is: "No." SETAs, like any environment, have their fair share of both hell and heaven. The merSETA's staff members have made this organisation one of the best places to work for and, in the process, have contributed to its best achievements to date.

There are enough examples at merSETA that demonstrate that the organisation respects honesty, integrity and individuals with a clear approach. People like dealing with individuals, and we at merSETA have created a culture of "People First". We encourage good and honest practices because in the final analysis, good does win over bad.

We believe that some of the skills that are required to be successful at work are commitment, willingness to learn, an inquisitive streak, teamwork and integrity. Aligning oneself to organisational goals rather than to one's personal goals is important too. If you want to grow, you need to demonstrate leadership capabilities and the



merSETA CEO, Dr. Raymond Patel

ability and willingness to take on larger roles. An ability to network and build interpersonal skills goes a long way in creating goodwill. We have worked on improving our staff and, in so doing, have responded to the needs of our clients – we are now experiencing greater participation in the services and products offered by the merSETA.

We participated in the RMI's (Retail Motor Industry of SA) centenary celebrations during the last three months; this exercise proved to be beneficial and rewarding to both organisations. Allow us once again to congratulate the RMI on this great achievement of 100 years of existence.

The merSETA has also become the first SETA that has availed over R1,1 billion over the next two financial years for the development of scarce and critical skills.

All of these great achievements are a result of our staff staying happy at work, and the key to that is:

- If you like what you are doing, then happiness will follow;
- People around us have a large role to play in our comfort levels at work;
- Try to build relationships with people around you;
- Build energy into people and the workspace around you;
- Demonstrate the highest level of commitment;
- Give it your best and ensure that you are successful; and
- The thrill of being part of a successful team will keep the adrenaline rush high and will ensure that you stay happy.

AGM: Partnerships the key to merSETA's SUCCESS

At the merSETA's Annual General Meeting held in September 2008, CEO Dr. Raymond Patel detailed the SETA's many achievements during the 2007/08 financial year and outlined its priorities for the future.

Dr. Patel's presentation focused on the importance of forging successful partnerships, with specific reference to the symbiosis between the sector and the merSETA.

"merSETA prides itself on the partnerships that it has developed and believes firmly in the saying 'no man is an island,' he said. "Therefore, no organisation can stand alone because 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (we are who we are because of others)."

Dr. Patel pointed out that the Joint Strategy and Planning Session held with all stakeholders at the beginning of the period under review was "a masterstroke in intervention and cooperation" between the merSETA on the one hand and the employer/labour bodies on the other hand.

"The outputs that were finally agreed upon were important in bringing about the realisation that entrepreneurial development and the skills development orientation principle still represent the best available pathway to socio-economic reform and, ultimately, to the deepening of democracy."

The session, he added, had allowed for the articulation of roles and responsibilities in providing the necessary training options. In addition, it had also highlighted the importance of not undermining the value of workplace motivation in the building of a culture of creativity, commitment, personal development and growth.

The Joint Strategy and Planning Session had secured a commitment from stakeholders to maximise the training of workers and help them identify with the goals of their respective organisations.



From left to right: Dr. Raymond Patel, Gavin Maile, Michael Tshayana and Anton Hanekom



Michael Tshayana and the incoming Chairperson of the merSETA Board, Jeanne Esterhuizen

"Our business entrepreneurs, Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) included, are performance driven and therefore require a workforce that is suitably trained and skilled, and that will cooperate and identify with the aims and objectives of their organisations," said Dr. Patel.



// merSETA prides itself on the partnerships that it has developed and believes firmly in the saying 'no man is an island'. //

During the 2007 Strategic Planning Workshop of the Governing Board, a need was identified for greater emphasis on the research function in order to allow for more accurate and strategic research products. Emphasis was placed on investing in developing a reliable model to identify and monitor scarce and critical skills in the manufacturing and engineering sectors.

Dr. Patel explained that the merSETA is in a sound financial position, with large reserves and assets that are properly accounted for, and sufficient funds to continue as a going concern. The merSETA received an unqualified audit from the Auditor-General for the 2007/08 financial year and achieved a score of 4.32 out of 5 on the National Department of Labour's scorecard, translating into 108% of targets being reached.

During the period under review, the levy payer base expanded by 14% from 11 165 to 12 781, and levy income increased by 15%, from R542 million to R625 million. There was a constant stream of grant payments, and total income was up by 19%.

Discretionary grant payments were 36% lower than in the previous reporting period, due to delays in registration of learners as well as delays in learners completing courses. The merSETA has put plans in place to improve on these factors during the 2008/09 financial year. Due to reduced project and discretionary grants expenditure, further reserves were accumulated, increasing by 53% to R828 million.

Other 2007/08 highlights included:

- merSETA implemented a training voucher project whereby 144 SMEs in the metal and engineering sector, 110 SMEs in the motor sector, and 28 SMEs in the plastics sector, were supported with more than R4 million worth of training vouchers;
- A total of 1 552 Skills Development Facilitators (SDFs)

and sector specialists were trained, exceeding the merSETA's training target by 202%;

- The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy was implemented;
- The Learning, Education, Training and Quality Assurance Division (LETQA) issued 6 127 certificates to learners in recognition of their achievements at accredited providers;
- Through the funding of Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs), the merSETA facilitated the development of 31 registered qualifications, and a further 14 qualifications were developed and submitted to the South African Qualifications Authority for approval and registration;
- There was a significant increase in the intake of apprentices compared to the previous financial year;
- The Query Centre was established within the Client Services Division to direct calls to an identified group of individuals and to minimise calls to Central Administration;
- The Projects Division was established in June 2007; and
- The merSETA was restructured to achieve a flat, operational-oriented organisation, giving regional offices more decision-making responsibility and rendering them more responsive to servicing clients' needs.

Skills development objectives needed to be prioritised in 2008/09, said Dr. Patel, and the future outlook for the merSETA included positioning it for NSDS III, focusing on delivery and increased accountability, clarifying the SETA mandate, performance monitoring and management, funding issues, research and a more flexible delivery system.

merSETA honours cream of the crop

The merSETA (Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority) recently honoured companies that have made a tangible difference to developing skills in the sector; these are companies that have shown their commitment to train and up-skill their respective workforces.

Close to 300 companies spread across the nation received merSETA Top Training Companies awards at glittering functions held around South Africa between 3 and 11 September 2008.

According to Derrick Peo, the merSETA's General Manager for Projects, it is the first time that the merSETA has given such public recognition to large and small companies for their contribution to skills development. However, Peo believes the awards were well deserved and could inspire others to follow suit.

"The awards will go a long way in changing the perception and stereotypical mindset that skills development is solely the responsibility of SETAs," he comments. "Honouring these companies will reinforce the fact that companies are directly responsible for training their own workforce, and that SETAs are merely facilitators that provide incentives and monitor the quality of training."

The merSETA covers the metal and engineering; auto manufacturing; motor retail and components; new tyre and plastic industries, sectors where the shortage of qualified artisans and technical professionals has made itself most felt as a hindrance to economic growth. The SETA facilitates numerous projects and learnerships to improve SA's technical capacity.

// The awards will go a long way in changing the perception and stereotypical mindset that skills development is solely the responsibility of SETAs. //

The merSETA awards recognised companies that have a proven track record of successful participation in skills development; these are companies that have helped the merSETA to attain two thirds of its service-level agreements with the Department of Labour.

Of late, companies have shifted their focus on targets and numbers towards a greater emphasis on skills planning and quality. Asked about the criteria for selecting top training companies, Peo said the following factors were taken into account:



Riaan van Zyl from Riaan's Auto Repairs, who was awarded Top Training Company status, Bronwin Abrahams (merSETA Client Relations Manager: Western Cape), Dr. Raymond Patel (merSETA CEO) and Moketenyana Mayongo



Benita Fourie (Schaeffler), Edward Ndzengana (Schaeffler), Shane Duncan (Welfit Oddy) and Thobile Majola (Welfit Oddy Trainee Skills Development Facilitator) from the Eastern Cape



From left to right: Dr. Raymond Patel, Gert Roselt and Moketenyana Mayongo

- Member companies are up to date with levy payments (where applicable);
- Member companies have received Mandatory Grants for last three years;
- Member companies have an average pass rate of 65% in the implementation of learnerships and apprenticeships;
- Member companies have a training committee in place if they have more than 50 employees (where applicable); and
- Member companies have a progression or placement average of 50%.



From left to right: Dr. Raymond Patel, Keith Cavanagh and Moketenyana Mayongo

According to Peo, the merSETA has invested considerably in ensuring that there is adequate support for companies that take ownership of their training. This, he points out, has been done through the establishment of a well-resourced Client Liaison Services Division and six regional offices.

The deployment of Client Liaison Officers and Quality Assurers throughout the country has meant that the SETA can provide direct assistance to companies wherever and whenever it is needed. This is a challenge for companies that have been known to become reluctant to engage in training and developing their workforce to join the skills revolution.

“The merSETA established an effective and efficient client interaction centre, and key projects like the SME training voucher and the Accelerated Artisan Training Programme (AATP) have demonstrated that it is possible to have quick turnaround times,” says Peo.

Regarding the quality of training provided by the companies that received awards, Peo emphasises that all training in the merSETA’s primary focus areas is quality assured. “We know that the training is of a high standard,

because of the requirement of a 50% employment rate, or placement into further learning,” he says.

By handing out these awards, the merSETA is giving a token of appreciation to all companies that have played, and continue playing, a pivotal role in ensuring that skills development is key in growing the economy of South Africa.

According to Peo, the merSETA has committed itself to honouring companies in the coming years, and may add more categories later on. At present, companies are categorised according to size – large (150 or more employees), medium (50 to 149 employees), and small (one to 49 employees).

“ We know that the training is of a high standard, because of the requirement of a 50% employment rate, or placement into further learning. ”

merSETA's new Chief Operations Officer - devoted to excellence

Wayne Adams, the newly appointed Chief Operations Officer of the merSETA, aims to bring the same drive and commitment to excellence to his new position as he did to his previous one.

As General Manager of the merSETA's Learnerships, Education, Training and Quality Assurance (LETQA) division, Adams was responsible for ensuring quality control of qualifications by providers.

In the newly created position of Chief Operations Officer within the merSETA, which he took up on 1 October 2008, he says he will be expected to ensure that operations within the organisation "run like a well-oiled machine".

"Anything to do with quality is a passion of mine," he reveals.

"I will have to ensure that we not only meet but exceed targets, in order to have extremely satisfied customers. From a strategy point of view, we need to be more client-focused, and deliver."

Adams likens a SETA to a baby: "You nurture it and want to see it grow and deliver on its promise, and make an impact."

After March 2010, explains Adams, a new SETA lifecycle begins and "we need to make sure we exist after that. The only way to survive is to keep our customers happy. If you don't have customers, you don't have a business, so we need to go beyond the service expected of us."



merSETA COO, Wayne Adams

// Anything to do with quality is a passion of mine. //



// You nurture it and want to see it grow and deliver on its promise, and make an impact. //

In striving toward attaining this ultimate goal, he points out, a key challenge is continuing to change the mindset of staff towards being more client-oriented and proactive. "We need to move away from the notion of 'it can be done tomorrow'. If the customer wants it today, give it to them yesterday."

In this respect, this driven go-getter fully intends to lead by example. "If I expect staff to meet customer needs, I need to set the tone for that if I expect them to follow suit." Although his core duties will be internal, in the "engine room", he intends to engage with customers on a regular basis.

He says it is critical to strike a balance in satisfying the differing expectations of both of the merSETA's "bosses" – its stakeholders and the Department of Labour – in terms of service delivery and meeting targets.

"Unfortunately, we don't have two pots of gold lying around, so we have to make it happen with one pot of gold," Adams quips.

With regard to the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) II, he says, "The biggest lesson learnt was the need to run a SETA as a business and be customer-focused and in this respect, the merSETA CEO has set the tone very well. If we go into NSDS III with that mindset,

hit the ground running and can inculcate that sort of mentality, the other SETAs will be jealous of us!"

Adams does not set his sights low; neither does he content himself with maintaining the status quo – he clearly prefers to reach for the stars.

"The merSETA's goal is to become the flagship SETA," he asserts.

"Our vision is to become leaders in closing the skills gap, and I believe we have the capacity, ability and willingness to be the flagship among SETAs."

Following a four-year stint at the transport SETA, Adams joined the merSETA in June 2005, and says that the organisation has taken "extremely positive strides" but that "there is always room for improvement".

"The only constant in life is change," he says, "and I am constantly looking for areas where we can improve. I hope that my legacy will be that the merSETA achieves what it set out to do and that we adequately prepare for the next set of leaders who can improve on what we have done."

As he takes the reins as merSETA Chief Operating Officer, Adams is clearly up to the challenge and says that he is looking forward to tackling his new position with gusto, and delivering on his mandate from the CEO.

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Pillay's self-belief earns her a prestigious HIV/AIDS fellowship

Believe in the hope that a new day is dawning; believe that your dreams will come true; believe in the promise of brighter tomorrows. Begin by believing in yourself – and this is exactly what merSETA Project Management's Romiela Pillay did.

In an interview with Achieve newsletter, Pillay couldn't hide her joy at being the recipient of an international fellowship worth \$18 000 (roughly R160 000) from the MAC AIDS Fund. The fund was established by MAC Cosmetics in 1994 to support men, women and children affected by HIV and AIDS globally.

Recognising the critical need to catalyse and encourage new and emerging leadership in HIV/AIDS prevention in countries hard hit by the pandemic, the MAC AIDS Fund launched the Leadership Initiative in collaboration with Columbia University and UCLA in the United States.

The Leadership Initiative is a one-year training programme designed to help cultivate emerging women leaders in South Africa who will make a major contribution to HIV/AIDS prevention advocacy at local, regional and national level. The programme focuses on reducing the spread of HIV and the impact of AIDS by addressing gender inequality.



Romiela Pillay

Pillay never expected her name to be on the list of applicants who were shortlisted to do a presentation about their experiences with HIV/AIDS.

A resounding 100 people applied for the fellowship, but only eight recipients were selected.

Facing a panel of 12 people, and having eight minutes in which to do a presentation on how to deal with HIV/AIDS, with specific reference to

their personal experiences, it was not going to be a walk in the park for the shortlisted candidates.

"It is always important to believe in yourself," Pillay says. "I also believed that there are people more deserving than me but I said to myself, 'I am going to give it my best shot' – and I did."

When Pillay received the letter inviting her for an interview she was in London, and had to clear the final



// Do not underestimate what you can do – when pushed to the limit, you may well surprise yourself as to what you can achieve in life. //

she walked away with one of the coveted fellowships.

Pillay's presentation concerned how to deal with HIV/AIDS and how to get the message across. Her approach was from a skills development perspective, taking into cognisance the cost a company incurs by losing skilled workers as a result of this disease.

"For example, having to replace a painter who has undergone intensive training for eight years is a difficult thing to deal with as an employer, both from a humanitarian and a skills replacement point of view," she explains.

Studies show that the sub-Saharan region is hardest hit by the HIV/AIDS pandemic which, from a skills development perspective, comes at a time when South Africa is being particularly adversely affected by the shortage of skills.

Asked about the problems encountered when dealing with the virus in SA, Pillay says, "We have done a lot of research in SA, but there is something we are not doing right. Look at the migration of people coming from all over the world to SA; these are some of aspects we still need to deal with as a country."

She believes that one of the biggest challenges that SA faces is dealing with people who are living with the virus. They are being stigmatised and are not being given sufficient support, she adds.

The first phase of the year-long programme started on 10

September 2008 at the South African offices of the UCLA Programme in Global Health. It involved obtaining information on HIV/AIDS, identifying trends, consulting research that had been undertaken over the years, and determining what needs to be done to address aspects such as pre- and post-testing.

Pillay then went on to spend six weeks in New York City at the HIV Centre for Clinical and Behavioural Studies, during which each Fellow had to design a plan for HIV/AIDS prevention advocacy in her respective field. Following this training period, Fellows receive seed funds and other support to launch their own HIV/AIDS prevention plan in South Africa, focusing on the link between gender inequality and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Pillay is grateful to Dr. Raymond Patel, Derrick Peo and the staff at the merSETA for being so supportive in her fellowship endeavour. "They sent me lovely messages and congratulated me," she relates.

"I am happy because I am going to gain a lot of experience internationally, broaden my horizons and look at how things can be done differently; we need not reinvent the wheel."

Her message is: Do not underestimate what you can do – when pushed to the limit, you may well surprise yourself as to what you can achieve in life. And Romiela Pillay is certainly living proof of this go-getting philosophy.

// I also believed that there are people more deserving than me but I said to myself, 'I am going to give it my best shot' – and I did. //

hurdle before being awarded the fellowship. The aunt that she had visited in London passed away on 23 August 2008, and Pillay had to go back for her burial. In addition, her SET project was starting, and, overall, the timing for the fellowship application was not good at all.

However, she forged ahead and triumphed, against the odds. Her self-belief and determination to succeed paid off handsomely, and

merSETA accredits ISOEs to raise the bar on quality

The quality of learning at South African education and training providers is taking centre stage, thanks to the establishment of Institutes of Sectoral and/or Occupational Excellence (ISOEs) by the merSETA.

Already, the merSETA has recognised two ISOEs nationally, and is in the process of welcoming a further three institutions to this elite club of top-notch providers.

According to Wayne Adams, merSETA's new Chief Operations Officer, the concept to create ISOEs was outlined in the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) II.

"It gives recognition to providers and institutions who take education and training seriously," he explains. "It's about producing quality learners and having pride in what they go on to achieve. Our customers and stakeholders should be the most sought-after in the industry."

Providers have to comply with stringent criteria in order to be accredited as an ISOE. This is to ensure that continuous improvement in the quality of learning becomes an important imperative in building the delivery system for all education and training aspects.

Adams says that in order to be recognised as ISOEs, institutions should have proven track records in terms of the calibre of learners they

have produced. The nature of the learning should be current, up to date with trends and internationally relevant.

Adams says that the merSETA will make resources available to support recognised institutions, to acknowledge the standard of their education and training and to ensure that staff members are trained in international best practices.

The funding is primarily aimed at assisting the providers and building intellectual capital, and the merSETA will not be investing in infrastructure development. "The institutions must be self-sustaining," he points out. "They must not be dependent on us for capital expenditure."

The two ISOEs currently recognised by the merSETA are the West Coast College in Vredendal and the Eastcape Midlands College in Uitenhage, both for welding.

merSETA is also in the process of recognising three more ISOEs, namely Northlink College's Wingfield Campus in Goodwood (for welding), the College of Cape Town in Salt River (for training within the motor sector), and the Coastal KZN FET College's Swinton Campus in Mobeni (for tool,

// The notion of continuous improvement in an organisation is important, and we at merSETA have already gone beyond meeting customers' expectations and are exceeding them continuously. We need to continue finding ways and means to improve so that we are always one step ahead. //

jig and die making). It is envisaged that more ISOEs will be identified in the near future.

In addition, the merSETA has entered into an agreement with the National Industry for the Deaf, providing a specialised service of converting current courseware to make it accessible and user-friendly for people with hearing disabilities.

"We will be conducting regular audits and monitoring of the ISOEs, to ensure continued compliance," says Adams. "The quality and content must remain relevant, and will be reviewed every three years or sooner with regard to changes in technology."

It is hoped that linkages will be forged between ISOEs and stakeholders that require learners, with the possibility of public-private partnerships being formed.

"The notion of continuous improvement in an organisation is important, and we at merSETA have already gone beyond meeting customers' expectations and are exceeding them continuously. We need to continue finding ways and means to improve so that we are always one step ahead."



DCD-DORBYL reaps benefits of fast-track in-house training programme

DCD-DORBYL Heavy Engineering, Vereeniging Works, is experiencing a skills shortage in Flux Core and Submerged Arc Welding. To overcome the immediate skills shortages within the company, ensuring that delivery requirements are met and that the business continues to grow, DCD-DORBYL Management has undertaken the following measures:

- Identified the specific skills needs of the company;
- Created innovative, practical and safe skills training methods;
- Implemented the system in-house;
- Managed and improved the system on a continuous basis; and
- Continually developed and rewarded the quality DCD-DORBYL artisans, to ensure their retention.

The first group of 10 labourers, grinders and cleaners went through a selection process and started with Flux Core Arc Welding and Gouging training in September 2007.

Three to six weeks of theoretical and practical training took place in the training centre where the selected Flux Core Arc Welders completed their training, welding



The DCD-DORBYL Graduate Flux Core Arc and Submerged Arc Welders

an 80mm plate that was ultrasonically and X-ray tested to prove the weld's cleanliness, depending on the individual's requirements.

On-the-job training started with the welding of smaller work parts and, after time, progressed to larger parts in thicker material. After each operation, an assessment was carried out by the supervisor.

The group then started with Submerged Arc Welding training. A four-day in-house training course was developed for this purpose. Assessment was done and the trainees then received on-the-job training on a one-to-one basis, supervised by a qualified welder.

On 29 August 2008, the group graduated and received their certificates from the General Manager of DCD-DORBYL Heavy Engineering, Gary Colegate.

merSETA events for



the quarter



The RMI: Driven by service for 100 years

// The RMI is proactive in enabling motor traders to deliver top-class service to motoring customers in Southern Africa. Part of this enabling process is to assist our members to develop existing or new employees to top-skilled status. //

The Retail Motor Industry of South Africa (RMI) is celebrating 100 years of business in 2008, and has cemented its status as a valuable partner for the merSETA.

The RMI ensures that proper standards of service and ethical trading conditions are maintained throughout the motor industry, and continues to make significant strides to broaden the skills base by supporting training and apprenticeships.

merSETA Chairperson Jeanne Esterhuizen says that the partnership between the RMI and the merSETA is of the utmost importance. "The RMI is proactive in enabling motor traders to deliver top-class service to motoring customers in Southern Africa. Part of this enabling process is to assist our members to develop existing or new employees to top-skilled status."

As the merSETA facilitates the sustainable development of skills in the sector, the value of such a partnership implies better support systems for the SETA's members on all levels of training facilitation.

Esterhuizen points out that hardly any artisan training took place in small and medium businesses over the past 10 years due to a lack of support systems to capacitate RMI

members in understanding training processes. "But due to the RMI's partnership with merSETA, all the problem areas have been identified to fast-track skills development in our sector."

A historic Memorandum of Understanding has also been signed by the RMI and the merSETA to ensure more effective service delivery to RMI-affiliated businesses.

At the moment, the industry is experiencing a shortage of trained motor mechanics, diesel mechanics, motorcycle mechanics, motor body repairers, automotive spray painters, automotive electricians, vehicle body builders, salespeople and managers.

Among the RMI's initiatives to alleviate the scarce and critical skills shortage is the RMI Training Forum, which drives and oversees all training programmes to ensure that they comply with the Government's national training strategy and objectives. A dedicated training department has also been established within the RMI. Part of this strategy is to establish centres of excellence to service all RMI members, achieved by strong public-private partnerships.

Another RMI project is the establishment of a transformation association to assist informal traders

with training, mentorship and enterprise development and help them access the formal market.

In 1908, Sir Albert Atkey formed the South African Society of Motor Traders with 17 members. Since then, change has been rapid, with auto manufacturing plants being established, followed by components, tyre and metal manufacturing plants. Since the 1990s, SA has become a major export base for components and vehicles.

The RMI has come a long way over the past 100 years, and today boasts in the region of 7 800 members nationwide. "Although technology changes and companies come and go, the RMI's voice has been influential in helping to steer a path for the country's automotive sector through the many forums they serve on and support functions they provide, such as the negotiation of labour agreements, consumer protection mechanisms, skills strategies, the implementation of BBBEE initiatives, the setting of standards, and so much more," says Esterhuizen.

The merSETA congratulates the RMI on its 100 years in business, and looks forward to many more years of its successful and fruitful partnership with the organisation.



merSETA sponsors draughting learners

As part of its quest to increase the number of learners participating in learning programmes aimed at developing scarce and critical skills, the merSETA is in the process of disbursing R1 billion over the next two financial years.

One of the areas it found to be under-resourced was draughting, particularly in the fields of steel and pipe design. Using the levy it collects from member companies, the merSETA has granted 100 learnerships in this field to learners at the African Academy, where the programme was launched on 3 September 2008.

"Initiatives such as this are key to resolving South Africa's skills crisis, and we're grateful to the merSETA for its investment in our students who are specialising in steel and construction," said Graig Yeatman, Chairman of the African Academy Board.

"We look forward to working closely with them in the future, in helping to resolve the skills crisis with which our country is faced."

The 100 beneficiaries were selected from the Academy's existing

// The long-term approach to investing both in people and in the future of South Africa is what we at the merSETA found most appealing, in our ongoing interactions with the Academy. **//**

group of students who are working towards their NQF4 qualification in multi-disciplinary Office Practice in Draughting. The learnerships were granted on the grounds of financial need, and cover all tuition fees as well as a monthly stipend for travel and food expenses. Once students complete and pass their qualifying exams, the Academy assists further by placing them in employment.

"The work that the African Academy is doing is resolving a number of pressing issues in South Africa," said Dr. Raymond Patel, CEO of the merSETA.

"Not only are students emerging from the Academy able to build a sustainable career with the skills that they have learnt, but they are filling a crying need in the engineering and construction sectors for skilled draughtspeople," he added. "The long-term approach to investing

both in people and in the future of South Africa is what we at the merSETA found most appealing, in our ongoing interactions with the Academy."

The African Academy was established in 1994 to address the critical need for well-trained and skilled draughtspeople, and to contribute to reducing unemployment in South Africa.

The Academy offers a variety of qualifications, software training courses and skills programmes.

Full-time courses are offered during the day, and night classes cater for students who are already employed, but who want to diversify their skills.

The Academy has expanded since its inception 14 years go, and can accommodate 252 students. Over 1 000 students have graduated from the African Academy to date.

Taking the reins in a male-dominated sector



merSETA Chairperson, Jeanne Esterhuizen

Newly-elected merSETA Chairperson Jeanne Esterhuizen has risen to the top in the traditionally male-dominated sector served by this SETA, and is looking forward to the challenges that come with the job.

Having been involved in the merSETA at regional level, as well as the retail motor industry and the Motor Industry Bargaining Council since 2003, the new appointment marks a natural progression for Esterhuizen. However, she confesses to it being “an absolute surprise” due to women historically being under-represented in the manufacturing, engineering and related services industry.

“Those who have served or worked with me will tell you that I am motivated and do not let go until I am sure a collective solution to inefficiency is implemented, and produces the intended results.”

“Naturally I am honoured, although realistically expecting challenges,” she relates, after the baton was passed to her from former Chairperson Xolani Tshayana.

Esterhuizen has worked independently since 1988, servicing a variety of companies, refining their accounting systems and training their employees in the use of accounting software.

“In 1996, my husband and I went into business together – and we are still together, in love and in business,” she quips. “Our business has expanded beyond belief, recently expanding to Namibia. Our main business has received many customer satisfaction rewards.”

With this track record in solid business practice, Esterhuizen will be well equipped in her task of striving for unity among merSETA stakeholders in a quest to share the same vision, mission and values.

Here, she is fully committed to achieving the mission of the merSETA: to facilitate sustainable development of skills and transformation, and to accelerate growth in manufacturing, engineering and related services.

As Chairperson, Esterhuizen’s responsibilities are to convene and facilitate meetings of the Governing Board, Executive Committee, Functional Standing Committee, Chamber and other committees. “As the leader of the Governing Board, I will be responsible for developing the



“ I believe we still have the time, as well as the collective expertise, within the merSETA to constructively advise Government of the training and development needs of the manufacturing, engineering and related services sector. ”

Board as an effective team. I will ensure that the decisions of the Board are implemented and that such decisions are in the best interests of the merSETA,” she explains.

Sometimes a new broom sweeps clean, and Esterhuizen says that any weakness in implementing decisions at the merSETA will be addressed without delay. “Those who have served or worked with me will tell you that I am motivated and do not let go until I am sure a collective solution to inefficiency is implemented, and produces the intended results.”

Not one to waste time talking when one can be doing, Esterhuizen is determined not to be sidetracked by “trivial” issues in tackling the skills shortage. “Time is a precious commodity to me; therefore, I always devise a strategy, in collaboration with experts, and then collectively execute the strategy,” she outlines.

Among these planned interventions is to undertake a concerted effort to develop a strong public-private partnership in the manufacturing and engineering sector.

Regarding the proposed new SETA landscape, following the under-performance of some SETAs in accelerating skills development, Esterhuizen says that change is to be expected where there is failure. “I believe we still have the time, as well as the collective expertise, within the merSETA to constructively advise Government of the training and development needs of the manufacturing, engineering and related services sector,” she elaborates.

Having been appointed to serve both merSETA staff and stakeholders, Esterhuizen states that it has been “a pleasure” to work with the merSETA since Dr. Raymond Patel took over the reins. “Personally, I believe open and honest communication forms the basis of any successful relationship, and ensures successful and excellent service delivery,” she adds.

“My philosophy is a simple one,” says Esterhuizen. “I believe training and development must add significant value to both business and the individual. Therefore, it must be purposeful and always directed by Government strategy.”

Profile – Current positions held

- Chairperson – RMI Free State/Northern Cape Region (2nd term)
- Convenor – RMI Labour Chamber Training Committee
- Chairperson – SAMBRA Free State/ Northern Cape (3rd term)
- Chairperson – MIBCO Free State/ Northern Cape (3rd term)
- Member – MIBCO Job Grading and Training Working Group
- Mentor – Central Refinish Training Centre

“ I believe training and development must add significant value to both business and the individual. Therefore, it must be purposeful and always directed by Government strategy. ”

merSETA's accelerated artisan training gets the thumbs-up

// The occasion marked the end of the first year of the merSETA's Accelerated Artisan Training Programme (AATP), which has now extended discretionary grants for 1 039 AATP learners. //

At the merSETA's first national conference aimed at sharing best practice in accelerated artisan training, held in Johannesburg on 17 September 2008, employers on the programme affirmed that whilst speeding up the delivery of qualified artisans remains a national imperative, accelerating the process can be achieved without compromising quality.

The occasion marked the end of the first year of the merSETA's Accelerated Artisan Training Programme (AATP), which has now extended discretionary grants for 1 039 AATP learners. Of this first cohort, 505 learners have reached the second milestone and 415 the third milestone.

The accelerated format of training and workplace experience is limited to between 80 and 104 weeks to final trade test, depending on the trade. The merSETA has invited its large, established employers with a successful track record in apprentice training to join the programme.

Arcelor Mittal told the conference that its tailored Learner Management System was key to its success in that it enabled the reduction of administration overload on the training staff whilst ensuring a quality management system.

Arcelor Mittal's Manager: Training and Recruitment, Terrence Harrison, went on to say that when the company's apprentices pass the trade test, they are appointed as "artisans in training" for a 12-month period. By the time a normal apprentice has worked through the standard four years of unstructured institutional training and workplace experience, the Arcelor Mittal AATP candidate has two years' supervised post-certification experience (and is classified as a "competent artisan") – compared to the artisan certified at four years (a "qualified artisan").

Colombus Stainless Steel demonstrated how its experienced coaches emphasise the importance of attitudes in the workplace – and that this was key to their success in accelerating artisan training. Training Manager Carlien van der Merwe explained how skills and knowledge of the trade alone were not enough to cope with the metal production processes – and that



“ McCarthy Motor Holdings said that its success in accelerated training was achieved through a number of interventions. ”



Project Manager Helen Brown and Project Coordinator Tsholofelo Mtembu

attitude was critical to artisan competence and continuous performance improvement.

McCarthy Motor Holdings said that its success in accelerated training was achieved through a number of interventions, including:

- Targeted recruitment, where a minimum of a Matric mathematics and science pass on Standard Grade was required;
- Structured training sequences;
- High-quality trainers who have proven competence in modern automotive applications;
- Structured working environments;
- Rewards for learning achievements and mentorship success;
- A focus on the depth of competence and not “parrot-fashion learning”, with measured learner productivity;
- Optimum skills mix ratios matched to production;
- Systems-driven monitoring; and
- A partnered approach on business profitability to support cost recovery.

Barloworld Motors uses a two-week extended selection programme to more accurately predict the success of potential apprentice candidates. Besides the usual entrance criteria of Matric mathematics and science, the company uses a battery of psychometric assessments, panel interviews and a two-week practical assessment in the workplace to inform its decision to appoint an apprentice in this accelerated training format.

More importantly, once the selection has been made, the parents and family of the candidate are invited to a “sign-on function” where, in the presence of senior management, the employment code, work ethics and corporate values are explained in detail before the signing of the apprenticeship contract.

The CEO of the merSETA, Dr. Raymond Patel, assured employers at this conference that the AATP remains a flagship programme for the SETA and is fully funded to the end of March 2010 – and until all apprentices on the programme have qualified.

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The Sector Skills Plan update: Helping identify skills priorities

By Salim Akoojee

The research and development office under the projects division has submitted its Sector Skills Plan (SSP) update for 2008/09. In accordance with Section 10 (1) of the Skills Development Act (1998), an SSP is to be developed within the framework of the National Skills Development Strategy.

The SSP is a crucial aspect of the functioning of the SETA. It provides an important basis for determining the skills priorities necessary to make our work meaningful. If we are to make sure that “we act in ways that make a difference to the lives of those we touch”, as the CEO, Dr. Raymond Patel, has noted in the foreword of the document, we need to ensure that we provide a real basis for the sector to understand itself.

Determining sector skills needs is a complex and somewhat arduous process, requiring a range of quite rigorous analyses. Predicting future skills needs is therefore much more complex and, some would argue, less precise. Yet, if we are to ensure that our education and training system is demand-driven, the process needs to be undertaken.

The lack of macro-level data makes the process that much more difficult. Thus, while South Africa’s performance in the international manufacturing market has improved considerably in the last decade, there is very little information on how global and domestic influences affect the demand for skills. Moreover, understanding and responding to this demand is not a once-off exercise. It requires a systematic, coordinated and ongoing review of market dynamics. The changing skills needs related to technological developments mean that definitions, standards and taxonomies become increasingly porous.

A key feature of the SSP is the identification of scarce and critical skills. This year, the process was undertaken in association with Chamber Manager Hosea Morapedi, who was responsible for ensuring that chambers were consulted.

Thus, as pointed out in the SSP, “We remain cognisant of the challenges and inconsistencies that occur as a result of this decision and will consequently treat it as a developmental work-in-progress.”

Looking forward, the merSETA is in the process of developing a comprehensive model designed to sharpen the identification of scarce and critical skills in our various sectors. In addition, a review that is currently being undertaken, of workplace skills plans submitted over the past three years, is likely to add value to the determination of various trends in the sector.

This year’s SSP is distinctive by its use of the new Department of Labour Organising Framework of Occupation (OFO) codes. This bold move provides the necessary framework for systemic analysis, with the possibility of integrating and analysing sub-sectoral, sectoral and national occupational data. This SSP review therefore, as far as is appropriate, uses this classification for analysis.

The results of the latest Sector Skills Plan is available on the merSETA intranet.

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The Brown Bag Seminar: Sharing ideas over lunch

Staff at the Gauteng and head offices of the merSETA have been bombarded by the term “Brown Bag Seminar”. What does this mean?

Simply put, the monthly Brown Bag lunch-time seminars are part of the Research and Development agenda to get staff engaging in skills development debates, and get them thinking about certain aspects of the merSETA’s work, be it schooling, higher education or the world of work. Staff members are invited to share expertise and best practice with others.

This is especially important in light of the establishment of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO).

The idea is to get input from someone who has either been exposed to, or has been intimately involved in, some aspects related to the organisation’s work as a SETA.

The next seminar, scheduled for 27 November 2008, deals with the role of women in engineering.

Joan Roodt, from the Human Sciences Research Council, as well as Dr. Renette du Toit, will lead the discussion on the current role of women in this “very male” environment and on prospects for transformation on this sector.

The discussant is Sheryl Pretorius, the merSETA’s regional Coastal Manager. The session will be chaired by Luzette Joseph.

merSETA takes the skills message into rural areas

Gaining access to information is a nightmare for most learners who reside in remote rural areas, most of which have no libraries and limited centres of information. In response to this challenge, the merSETA has joined the Cell C Career Choice Expo to preach the gospel of career guidance and address the skills shortage in the sector.

Lack of information regarding careers, the demands they make on the individual and the characteristics and qualifications aspiring graduates need in order to achieve success, must be addressed urgently to help South Africa’s learners make informed choices.

Unfounded expectations or daunting misconceptions hinder countless graduates from completing their education – thus depriving the economy of much-needed skills.

Cell C’s second annual Career Choice Expo targeted learners from the rural communities and offered a variety

of career options presented by various companies, while also affording learners the opportunity to interact with them in order to find out more about the job prospects that are available in different sectors.

“Having recognised the success of the Take a Girl Child to Work Day project, we also realised that there was an increasing demand for career guidance from learners who were not able to benefit from Take a Girl Child to Work Day,” says Mercia Maserumule, Cell C Corporate Social Investment Manager.

“We extended the project beyond the urban borders, for the benefit of both boys and girls.”

The merSETA has a vital role to play in developing communities by making a meaningful, tangible and sustainable difference in the lives of all South Africans, particularly at grassroots level.

For this reason, the SETA heeded the call by Cell C in contributing again this year.

XLNT by name, XLNT by nature

// We are proud to announce that we conceptualised the idea of offering courtesy taxis to our clients, which is a first in the industry. //

XLNT Panelbeaters has made history by scooping the SABS President's Award, making it the first panelbeating shop to have achieved this feat.

This merSETA member had humble beginnings, with co-owner Dennis Venter starting the business in his back yard with two employees. After being forced to move his panelbeating concern out of the suburbs, he opened his first shop in Blackheath in the Western Cape, but continued to experience difficulties, often being on the brink of closing his doors.

However, his religious faith, coupled with hard work, a strong work ethic and a commitment to continuous improvement, ensured that XLNT Panelbeaters persevered, endured and eventually thrived.

When Dennis's son David, a successful industrial engineer, decided to join the business in 2005 and help the family, things began taking a turn for the better. XLNT secured a contract with the Johannesburg City Council to respray and stripe its Metro police vehicles – and this marked the turning point for the business.

With the proceeds from this contract, they secured better

premises – and the escalation of the XLNT brand was set firmly in motion.

David understood the importance of quality in the work environment, and tasked Deano Goodman with implementing the SABS ISO 9001:2000 quality management system. Quality Assurance Manager Goodman, who previously worked at Eskom's Koeberg Nuclear Power Station, was well equipped for the job and set about ensuring that XLNT became the first and only panel shop in South Africa to achieve the SABS Certification.

Their journey towards this goal started in 2007, and included training and developing management and staff in achieving this milestone. "We set about implementing a safety-conscious environment where safety would become the priority, aiming to increase awareness and make staff 'their brother's keepers,'" explains Goodman.

XLNT's efforts have paid off, and among the organisation's many achievements, it can count receiving Automobile Association Quality Assured (AAQA) certification and the highest grading by the South African Motor Body Repair Association (SAMBRA). It has been successfully

audited by these two bodies, as well as by Auto Matrix.

In terms of its growth strategy, the business has targeted market expansion and acquisitions.

A 100% BEE company, XLNT has recently expanded its workshop floor space and purchased more than R2 million worth of specialised equipment to further enhance its service offering. Earlier this year, XLNT purchased a panelbeating and spray-painting shop in Sea Point, and has since managed to more than double its average turnover.

"We are proud to announce that we conceptualised the idea of offering courtesy taxis to our clients, which is a first in the industry," adds Goodman.

"We are fortunate to have management that think big but don't necessarily have their heads in the clouds; they are willing to constantly get their hands dirty. Your vision is something that you have to continuously keep enforcing."

With motivated staff constantly pushing themselves to excel and improve, and continually clocking up accolades in the sector, XLNT remains firmly locked in on its goal: to be not only the biggest, but the best panel shop in South Africa.



In recognising the critical shortage of skilled workers in the engineering sector of our economy, the Merseta has designed a special programme to fast-track the training of suitably qualified candidates towards a formal artisan status. The programme is run in conjunction with Employers who pay their Skills Levy to the MERSETA. The AATP (Accelerated Artisan Training Programme) is calling young school leavers who have completed their Senior Certificate (technical N3 subjects or academic matric) with passes in maths and science, or university students from the Engineering Faculties who cannot complete their degree/diploma, to register on this application platform for consideration by Employers for their respective artisan programmes in various trades.



METAL BASED TRADES

The training programme is split into two phases – firstly, the selected candidates complete a 26 week course which covers all the training modules in theory and simulated practical for the trade. The programme then moves to the second phase which is based at the Employers premises where all the modules for the trade are covered in the practical workplace experience format for a period of 54 weeks. The Trade Test is completed at the end of the total 80 week period (26 weeks institutional training and 54 weeks practical based in the workplace).

BENEFITS OF BECOMING A QUALIFIED ARTISAN

The career path benefits for qualified artisans are probably the most diverse when compared to any other qualification. Once qualified, an artisan may decide to study further and start his own business; or study further (NQF 5) to become a specialist Technician or Master Artisan; or study further to become a vocational trainer; or study further in areas of supervision and management to climb the corporate ladder. Another benefit is that the candidate “earns while learning” – and the cost of the institutional training is carried by the Employer.

MOTOR BASED TRADES

This set of trades has a slightly different format in that there are four competency levels. Each of the four levels take 26 weeks to complete and each level ends with a Level Test.

The institutional training is approximately 6 weeks followed by workshop based training at the dealership for another 20 weeks before the level test can be completed. Each candidate is obligated to complete all four levels in 104 weeks.

HOW TO REGISTER ON www.merseta.org.za

First confirm your qualifications by ticking the relevant boxes. Only if you can confirm that you already have the maths and science credits will you be able to mark other Nated subjects or university credits obtained. If you have Grade 12 maths and science you will be able to load your personal information on the second page. If not, please use the subject choices as a guide for applying again once the missing subjects have been completed. For the Metal Trades, candidates require Four engineering related subject credits at least at N3, plus maths and science at least at N2 or Grade 9. For the Motor related trades, candidates require Grade 12 maths and science to qualify for this programme. Please note that the entry requirements for the AATP are higher than a normal apprenticeship because of the accelerated format. Your information on this website will expire after 6 months – so if you wish to keep your details on this site you will have to update your information every six months.

This site is designed and made available for the benefit of Merseta levy paying Employers wishing to participate in the AATP.



CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP



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