



merSETA

MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA

Speech at NUMSA Solar Water Heaters Summit

**Comrades, Compatriots,
Friends, Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thank you for this warm reception as well as the opportunity to showcase what the merSETA has to offer in the fields of training and development in the renewable energy field.

Today's opportunity has come at a time when employment prospects for the installation, maintenance and manufacture of solar heating and solar air-conditioning specialists are significantly on the increase.

Yes...we know that a mere 220 000 solar heaters out of a targeted 1-million have been installed throughout South Africa since the project began years ago. And yes...we know that the vast majority of such solar heating installations are imported from abroad, leading to major lag time in local employment-creation efforts in South Africa.

We further note that imports of solar water heaters rose from 23 percent in 2007 to 40 percent in 2008. Thus, the job losses and lack of training that goes with such massive rises in imports is hard to fathom. Without getting political and with due respect to my Eskom colleague here, Andrew Etzinger, we also know now that Eskom is now focusing on heating pumps instead of solar geysers and is also reducing the rebate on solar water geysers.



But does the outlook for this industry, especially regarding the creation of jobs and energy efficiency in South Africa, look so grim?

The merSETA and I don't think so.

Compared with other occupations, jobs for heating, air-conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers are projected to increase 28 percent in the next seven years. This includes all forms of energy machine maintenance, be it thermal, solar, fossil and others.

As manufacturing, the stock of home building and factory output increase, so must the demand for commercial, industrial and residential energy efficient systems rise.

The R832-billion public infrastructure programme will demand relevant artisans. All energy-related artisans will be in extremely high demand in the next three years, particularly in the solar heating, air-conditioning and refrigeration sectors.

In particular, we are aware that there is already widespread demand for non-fossil fuel heating, air-conditioning and refrigeration engineers and technicians, solar geyser installers, service technicians and sheet metal experts.

Industry, therefore, must go this route for cost saving. The savings from non-fossil fuel dominated energy systems will be huge.

And this is where merSETA can be of assistance.

As the world goes greener, the development of new energy-saving systems must lead to better energy management. This means the installation of more efficient systems in factories, homes and offices. Old systems will be replaced, more efficient maintenance required and greater technical capacity will be needed.

Learnerships and apprenticeships are, therefore, a crucial way of preparing for this demand in skills.

merSETA offers levy-paying companies ample opportunity to train potential engineers and technicians in your industry.

And NUMSA, by its very mandate, must play a key role in identifying those skills needed to effect a greener economy. Installation of energy efficient systems might



be a once-off, but it is your members...NUMSA members...who will have to have the skills for service and maintenance which are ongoing issues. As CEO, I state categorically that the merSETA is focusing strongly on further education and training in these areas. It was your industry that ensured that the hospitality of Soccer World Cup guests was at perfect levels. It was your members who ensured that the heating systems in its various guises were up to scratch...and remained so during this mammoth undertaking.

It will now be your members who will ensure the massive public infrastructure has the requisite energy efficient systems training and skills.

However, it is also imperative that companies present today as well as those not directly linked to the industry create conditions to ensure their sustainable growth.

As the world economy lifts...and it will...so too will the demand for skilled labour in the energy efficient sphere. It might take a while, but training waits for no industry.

Since its inception, the merSETA has trained and equipped more than 28 000 learners, apprentices and artisans. This is part of national government's plan to improve and sustain the necessary skills to guarantee South Africa's economy at the cutting edge of world technological frontiers.

We believe not in doing things right for the sake of doing things...but in doing the right things the right way. We are thought leaders who share the philosophy of investing in our people.

Well-trained employees are more productive and motivated and are thus able to contribute to the overall success of the company and, therefore, the industry.

I must also state that the merSETA is focusing on advancing women and previously disadvantaged people.

Our constitution ensures gender parity...and each company in the energy efficient and related sectors must ensure women are empowered to their fullest extent.

Yes, the merSETA is also driven by black economic empowerment (BEE). And women empowerment is an integral part of government's BEE strategy.



But at the same time, appointees must have the “ability to do the work”, and apprentices and learners in your industry must be mentored to ensure their success. NUMSA must ensure this route is consistently followed.

It does not help paying lip service to the empowerment of our people if we do not take into consideration the fact that there is an urgent need for the realignment of society.

We have to satisfy the projected 28 percent growth in job opportunities in the energy efficient sector. And there is no better way to prepare for the future than through merSETA-sponsored initiatives.

I notice that an outcome of this meeting is to develop, organise and determine training and skills development for this sector. The purpose is to input into government strategy. The merSETA, through its training initiatives, wants to be part of strengthening your solar thermal policies and measures by informing decision-makers on tested and proven international policies.

We sincerely want to be part of efforts to train NUMSA members in the design, production, installation, implementation and servicing of solar water heating and solar thermal systems.

Until we meet again,

Thank you!

Dr Raymond Patel

CEO -- merSETA

