



Quick Brief

A news update from the NBI on its programmes,
business leadership and issues on sustainable development.

A Foot in the Door: Getting South Africa's Youth Working in the Green Economy

8 December 2015

The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), in partnership with the National Business Initiative (NBI), hosted a Breakfast to reflect on the lessons learnt from the design and implementation of an initiative aimed at Supporting Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET) to build Green Skills. The initiative implemented in partnership with Northern Cape Rural TVET College and Northern Cape Urban TVET College, aims to enhance youth employability in renewable energy technologies, specifically in the installation and maintenance of Solar Water Heaters. The purpose of the Breakfast was to:

- Critically reflect on the lessons learnt with a view to informing the design and implementation of Phase Two of the initiative.
- Identify key components of an emerging model for building green skills in TVET Colleges.
- Encourage participation of companies, funders and other role players in order to scale-up the initiative.

Opening the event, Zama Luthuli, Divisional Executive Corporate Affairs at the IDC, recognised TVET colleges as key institutions in the development of mid-level skills for the green economy. She noted that '... strong and responsive TVET Colleges give youth a foot in the door to access sustainable jobs and self-employment.' The IDC's funding for this initiative is in support of Government's efforts to strengthen TVET colleges to become centres of excellence and lays the foundation for Colleges to respond purposefully to emerging demands in the green economy.

Phase One of the project enrolled ten students in a Solar Water Heater Installation and Maintenance programme where they took a seven week face-to-face practical green skills course on Plumbing and Solar Water Geysers and Entrepreneurship Education on starting and managing a business, followed by six months of structured workplace-based learning at Solar Earth, a company that supplies and installs solar products.

Joanne Yawitch, NBI Chief Executive Officer, acknowledged that 'big things start small' recognising the significant lessons generated for scaling-up the project. She said that the sheer scale of youth unemployment which sits at 62% and the projected economic growth rate of less than 2% '...requires a concerted effort from all of us to find appropriate responses to these complex issues.' Accelerating and scaling-up best practice and interventions that show potential to succeed and funding innovation in skills development are some of the ways in which business, education providers, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and research agencies could respond through joint efforts. She invited employers and SETAs in the construction, manufacturing, chemical and insurance sectors to provide incentives for youth participation in green technologies.

A panel comprising Kevin Fairweather, a representative from Northern Cape Urban TVET College, Venessa Holtzhausen, owner of Solar Earth and Quinton Zanazo, a student at Northern Cape Urban TVET College who took part in the project shared first-hand experiences of the project. The panellists highlighted factors such as understanding the level of preparedness of students and providing the necessary bridging interventions, curriculum relevance to industry needs and the need for industry compliant training facilities and equipment as well as '...employers who are willing to guide, mentor and handhold students and identify those with potential to run their own businesses...' As Quinton Zanazo put it, '.....the experience I gained at Solar Earth was beyond my expectationsI went there thinking I am going to install solar geysers but I also learned about solar borehole pumps , handling difficult customers and doing the paper work.....I feel that I am ready for the world of work.'

In her reflections on the project, Makano Morojele, Head of Skills Development at the NBI highlighted the following lessons:

- Policy environment, innovation and college readiness: A policy environment and funding arrangements that are flexible and allow for innovation and testing of new ideas such as enterprise development, taking into account individual college peculiarities and capabilities.
- Curriculum design and delivery: Curriculum that is responsive to real needs in the market, delivered by qualified lecturers who go into industry regularly for workplace exposure. Achieving a balance between employability and accreditation. Robust student assessment and selection and provision of targeted bridging interventions where necessary.

- Labour market intelligence: Understanding local labour market needs and factoring those into the design and delivery of the project. Purposeful partnerships that facilitate active employer participation in student selection, curriculum development and structured workplace-based learning.

To access Makano Morojele's full presentation please click [here](#).

Phase Two will see a larger cohort of students who will undergo rigorous assessment, selection and matching to ensure success. The curriculum will be refined to meet industry demands and accreditation requirements. Greater effort will be put into increasing the number of employers to improve opportunities for student placements and lecturer workplace-exposure. A review of the Entrepreneurship Education component will be conducted to provide a foundation for small business development. Key to the success of this initiative is the ability of the College to provide the requisite administrative and management function.

Thus far the project has demonstrated what can be achieved when interventions by Colleges are in synergy with industry needs and operate within policy frameworks which create opportunities for youth participation in the green economy. Arguably, the approach adopted for this project can be replicated in other sectors of the economy.

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