

# New Futures Programme Final Evaluation Report

Prepared for SchoolNet South Africa

August 2010

# New Futures Programme

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## Final Evaluation

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## ***Acknowledgements***

**SAIDE would like to acknowledge and thank all those people who gave generously of their time to participate in the New Futures Programme Evaluation. They include the:**

- Janet Thomson: Director, SchoolNet South Africa;
- Sally Cruickshanks : The Programme Coordinator, New Futures Programme;
- The New Futures Programme Facilitation Team: Sophia Kousiakis, Violet Chisulo and Themba Mabaso;
- The eMentors interviewed; and the
- Participants, from both Phase One and Phase Two of the New Futures Pilot Programme.

**The evaluation was designed, carried out and the report prepared by:**

Maryla Bialobrzaska, Programme Specialist: SAIDE.

## ***Acronyms and Abbreviations***

<b>ADE -Brasil</b>	Academia para o Desenvolvimento da Educacao (AED in Brazil)
<b>AED</b>	Academy for Educational Development (USA)
<b>DoPW</b>	Department of Public Works
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>MERSETA</b>	Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA
<b>MS-US</b>	Microsoft United States
<b>MS SA</b>	Microsoft South Africa
<b>NFP</b>	New Futures Programme
<b>NFP 1</b>	New Futures Programme – Phase One of the pilot
<b>NFP 2</b>	New Futures Programme – Phase Two of the pilot
<b>NGO</b>	Non Government Organisation
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>PBL</b>	Project Based Learning
<b>Saide</b>	South African Institute for Distance Education
<b>SNSA</b>	SchoolNet South Africa

# ***Executive Summary***

## **Background**

### **Introduction**

Saide (the South African Institute for Distance Education) was requested by SchoolNet South Africa (SNSA) to do an evaluation of the New Futures Pilot Programme (NFP). The pilot was conceptualized to be run in two phases with two groups of participants, NFP 1 (October 2009 – March 2010) and NFP 2 (March – June 2010). It was intended that the evaluation should be both formative and summative.

### **The evaluation terms of reference**

The evaluation was to assess:

- The effectiveness of the programme in equipping information technology (IT) graduates with the relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes/behaviours to successfully procure employment as entry level IT technicians;
- The quality of the facilitation of the programme delivery; and
- The quality of the programme support materials.

### **Evaluation method**

A qualitative approach to the evaluation process was undertaken. This included:

- Consultation on the evaluation design with the SchoolNet NFP team and an Academy for Educational Development (AED) consultant;
- Programme document collection and review;
- Review of NFP evaluation questionnaires – baseline, midterm, endline, as well as all questionnaires pertaining to the e-mentoring process and the job shadowing component;
- Observation of: initial planning sessions; trial training session; and selected sessions of the first and second phases of the pilot programme;
- Conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with all key stakeholders;
- Triangulation of observations and materials review by conducting two focus group interviews with programme participants from both phases of the pilot programme;
- Review of curriculum support materials;
- Preparation and presentation of interim formative feedback based on the results of the first phase of the pilot evaluation (October 2009 – March 2010).
- Preparation of a final summative evaluation report.

### **New Futures employability programme aims**

The programme aims are to enable IT graduates from universities of technology and colleges to gain:

- a strong foundation across a broad range of ICT skills - to troubleshoot, diagnose and fix simple to complex computer problems including those that plague hardware, networks, software and communication systems; and
- soft skills to enable youth to navigate the world-of-work and search for and secure entry level ICT technical support positions or to start their own ICT technical support businesses.

These aims are to be achieved by:

- developing, testing and refining a demand-driven ICT employability programme for youth that can be sustained and scaled up in South Africa; that
- employs an integrated mix of learning activities including ICT skills, life and employability skills, work place readiness, entrepreneurship and electronic mentoring.

The programme aims to enable youth to gain the skills, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours that are essential for securing quality employment in the 21st Century.

### **Programme description**

AED (an American – based NGO) with funding from Microsoft US approached the South African Department of Public Works (DoPW) to implement this project. When negotiations with the DoPW fell through, SchoolNet SA was approached and agreed to deliver the programme.

### **Stakeholder roles and responsibilities**

Funding: Microsoft US

Programme delivery: SchoolNet SA

Programme support: AED

### **The participants**

IT graduates from universities of technology and colleges.

### **Programme method**

The method used for programme delivery, was one advocated by AED, Project Based Learning (PBL). The principles that inform this delivery approach include the notion that: learning focused on real-world problems captures students' interest and provokes serious thinking as the students acquire and apply new knowledge in a problem-solving context. The teacher plays the role of facilitator, working with students to frame worthwhile questions, structuring meaningful tasks, coaching both knowledge development and social skills, and carefully assessing what students have learned from the experience. As far as is possible, the programme seeks to simulate the world of work and result in learners developing products that demonstrate mastery of relevant skills, abilities, and behaviours.

Participants in the NFP attended face to face delivery session daily for a period of five months.

In addition to the PBL approach, an online mentoring process was set up. Twenty volunteer mentors drawn from a pool of experienced professionals helped to support the participants. A two week job shadowing opportunity was also structured into the programme.

### **Programme content**

The programme content was divided into two key areas, these are: Hard skills (technical skills); Soft skills (Social empowerment/employability/general skills and navigating the world of work).

### **Programme duration**

The pilot programme was designed up to run in two phases. The duration of each phase was approximately five months. The participants were required to attend the programme five days a week from 08h30-16h00.

Microsoft SA provided each participant with a laptop for daily use for the duration of the course.

The programme was delivered at the Sci Bono Science and Technology Centre in Johannesburg.

## **Key findings and recommendations**

### **Overall programme strengths**

The overall strengths of this programme are highlighted in the first part of this section.

#### **The participant's expectation well met**

The participants from both groups had a range of expectations from the programme. These were typically clustered around *gaining ICT skills, networking, becoming more employable and job placement*. Across both groups, the average rating on a four point scale was 3.1 or 'well met'.

#### **Overall good quality of programme**

All participants cited a variety of programme highlights - from the presentations made by the various guest speakers through to new hard and soft skills learnt. For a number of participants, the job shadowing experience helped to crystallise the nature of workplace culture and the requirements for successful engagement in a professional environment. A number of participants from both groups also emphasised the value they derived from the e mentoring component of the programme. During the focus group interviews it became particularly clear that this element of the programme was very important in providing support, boosting confidence and generally pointing these young people in the right direction.

Classroom observations provided evidence of quality facilitation. The team members were enthusiastic, committed to the participants and the project and able to engage meaningfully with the project-based learning approach.



The key content areas that were the focus of the programme were well covered and the curriculum support materials used were assessed to be of good quality, up to date and relevant.

### **Programme success rates**

***Programme completion rate:*** The completion rate of the NFP pilot is high. In the first phase, twenty-one of the original twenty six participants or 81% of the total number enrolled, completed the programme. The completion rate for the second phase was twenty out of twenty, or 100%.

***Participant's perception of their employability:*** All the participants said that they felt that the NFP had made them more employable. Three main reasons cited were, the importance of the practical experience gained on this programme which was typically lacking in most College/ University of Technology programmes; the acknowledgement of the importance of soft skills in making one more employable; and in general, the recognition that this programme helps in "closing the gap between the field of study and work".

***Employment, internships and learnerships:*** At the time of writing this report, 14 of the 21 or 67% of the young people who completed NFP 1 have been placed in employment or in an internship/learnership leading to further skilling and employment. Of the 20 participants that completed the NFP 2, 7 or 35% have found employment. The average across both phases of the pilot is therefore 51%.

### **Recommendations for future programme delivery**

This section of the report deals with the detail of areas that need strengthening or that need to be thought about differently if the programme is to be offered in the future. Recommendations are provided both for strengthening the programme delivery as well as for making it more efficient. Key issues are highlighted, for detailed recommendations please see the full report.

#### **Conduct programme review**

To allow for the lessons learned from the pilot to be integrated into future programme delivery, it is recommended that a programme review process be undertaken. Such a process will serve to further strengthen the curriculum, in particular, attention needs to be given to planning an integrated assessment strategy and the appropriate balance between hard and soft skills.

#### **Examine alternative methods for programme delivery**

It is recommended for greater efficiency and possible up scaling, that the programme delivery method be changed to a blended approach. It is proposed that the option of delivering the soft skills component through distance education methods (online or electronically prepared on a CD-Rom) be thoroughly investigated.

It is recommended that the hard skills component continue to be offered using a classroom-based, face-to-face approach.

### **Programme logistics that need attention**

**Connectivity:** A key impediment to the smooth delivery of the NFP was the poor connectivity experienced at the teaching venue. If the current face-to-face model of delivery is pursued in the future, it is imperative to ensure good connectivity that supports this method of delivery effectively.

**Laptops:** Regardless of the model of delivery selected, it is recommended that the cost of supplying each participant with a laptop or a system for making laptops available for the duration of the whole programme is properly investigated.

### **Cost models of programme delivery for future planning and funding**

It is recommended that an accurate costing of the current programme model is undertaken as well as costing of the proposed blended model. Personnel cost will clearly be higher in the current model while initial materials development costs will be higher in the blended model. However, once the blended model is taken to scale, the initial materials development cost will be significantly ameliorated. Costs entailed in supplying laptops will also need to be thoroughly investigated.

### **Strengthen the quality assurance feedback loop for enhanced programme design and delivery**

An impressive number of internal programme quality assurance mechanisms were designed and most were implemented during the pilot programme. There is however room for more rigorous implementation of all facets of quality assurance. It is also recommended that the results derived from the various quality assurance processes are fed back into the programme. This includes participant profile data from the baseline questionnaire which should be used to inform programme design and delivery; feedback from mentors; and from managers at the companies that hosted job shadowing.

## **Conclusion**

The very large number of young people not in employment, education or training in South Africa, has been well documented in recent times. Currently it is estimated that this number 18 – 24 year olds in this category is around three million. (Nico Cloete, p3: 2009)<sup>1</sup> In Cloete's words, this "*is not only an educational problem but constitutes a social and economic disaster*".

In the light of the above, the need for the New Futures Programme is unquestionable. In fact, this intervention is imperative. The stakeholders and the NFP team that have made this programme happen need to be commended for their vision and for their commitment in seeing this pilot programme through to its conclusion, despite numerous challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Cloete, N. (ed) 2009 *Responding to the Educational Needs of Post –School Youth, 18 – 24 year old*, Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET): Cape Town.

The programme aims are to enable every participant to gain:

- a strong foundation across a broad range of ICT skills - to troubleshoot, diagnose and fix simple to complex computer problems including those that plague hardware, networks, software and communication systems; and
- soft skills to enable youth to navigate the world-of-work and search for and secure entry level ICT technical support positions or to start their own ICT technical support businesses.

In this two phased pilot these aims have to a very large extent been achieved. The evaluation findings show that across both phases of the pilot 89% of the participants completed the pilot programme. The majority of those that completed the programme, reported that they consider themselves to be more employable than they were before they entered the programme. They feel that they have gained both the hard and soft skills necessary for employment and with that, the confidence to seek and again employment. Across both groups that completed the pilot programme, 51% have gained employment or have taken up learnership or internship positions (the spread across the two phases of the pilot is as follows: 67% of NFP 1 and 35% of NFP 2).

The success of this pilot is well documented and while some aspects of the programme have been identified (above) for further strengthening, a very firm foundation for taking the NFP forward is already in place.

It is believed that with the necessary refinements, the New Futures Programme will make an invaluable contribution to the national project of skilling youth for successful employability. It is therefore hoped that the NFP will attract suitable funding that will make it possible to take it to scale in ways that have been recommended above.

# Introduction

## Background

Saide (the South African Institute for Distance Education) was requested by SchoolNet South Africa (SNSA) to do an evaluation of the New Futures Pilot Programme (NFP). The pilot was conceptualized to be run in two phases with two groups of participants, **NFP 1** (October 2009 – March 2010) and **NFP 2** (March – June 2010). It was intended that the evaluation should be both formative and summative. The formative midterm report, to be prepared at the end of NFP 1 would serve to offer constructive support for the second phase of the delivery of the pilot programme – NFP 2.

This summative report, to be prepared at the end of both phases of the pilot programme would provide a final evaluation.

The terms of reference were to assess:

- The effectiveness of the programme in equipping information technology (IT) graduates with the relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes/behaviours to successfully procure employment as entry level IT technicians;
- The quality of the facilitation of the programme delivery; and
- The quality of the programme support materials.

The evaluation includes the following elements:

- Document review (including a review of contracts setting the responsibilities of various stakeholders; programme planning processes; and various programme evaluation questionnaires).
- Observation of training sessions from both phases of the pilot.
- Interviews with programme management, facilitators, mentors and participants.
- Review of programme support materials

The evaluation was also orientated towards the following aspects of the NFP:

- The requirement that the participant's experience/context informs the development of the programme.
- The skills-based and practice-based nature of the course.
- The degree to which the course meets the outcomes it has identified for itself.
- The fit between profiles of the facilitators and the outcomes of the course.
- The requirement that the practical work of the course is aimed at developing appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes required by IT technicians to fulfil the required monitoring and support functions that are relevant to the work place.

## Evaluation scope and process

To meet the requirements of both a formative and summative evaluation, Saide undertook a phased approach to the evaluation of the NFP pilot. Informal feedback was provided to the New Futures Programme team after each one of the first phase evaluation observation sessions. A formal midterm formative report back session was held with the team responsible for the design and delivery of the NFP on 1 April 2010 and this was followed up with a formal written report in May 2010. On completion of the second phase of the pilot programme, this final summative report was produced in August 2010.

## Method

A qualitative approach to the evaluation process was undertaken. This included:

- Consultation on the evaluation design with the SchoolNet NFP team and Eric Rusten (Academy for Educational Development [AED] consultant);
- Programme document collection and review;
- Review of baseline and endline participant NFP questionnaires as well as all evaluation questionnaires filled in by participants and companies involved in the job shadowing component in NFP 2 and the evaluation questionnaires completed by mentors and mentees at the end of the mentoring process in both NFP 1 and NFP 2.
- Observation of initial planning sessions;
- Observation of a trial training session;
- Designing a set of questionnaires for interviews with participants; members of the New Futures Programme facilitation team; project coordinator and mentors.
- Observation of selected sessions of the first phase of the pilot programme delivery (October 2009 – March 2010) and the second phase (March -June 2010). These were framed by *the Learning Facilitator Performance Standards* prepared by the team;
- One-on-one semi-structured interviews with:
  - Eric Rusten (Academy of Educational Development staff member responsible for programme design and delivery support);
  - The SchoolNet SA Director;
  - The Programme Coordinator;
  - The three Programme Facilitators; and
  - Two of the Mentors
- Triangulation of observations and materials review by conducting two focus group interviews with 11 programme participants each from both the first and second phase of the pilot programme;

- Informal discussions with programme participants
- Overall review of the NFP design;
- Review of all curriculum support materials;
- Preparation and presentation of interim formative feedback based on the results of the first pilot phase of the evaluation (October 2009 – March 2010).
- Preparation of the draft Midterm evaluation report.
- Finalisation of the midterm report after receiving the comment from the New Futures Project team and SchoolNet Director;
- Preparation of a final summative evaluation report.

## **Programme background and description**

### **Setting up the programme**

Initially the Academy for Educational Development (AED) with funding from Microsoft in the United States approached the South African National Department of Public Works. They hoped to set up a partnership to develop and implement a project that links private, public and NGO sector partners together to create an ICT-based employability and entrepreneurship learning programme for South African youth.

Despite protracted discussions around the setting up of this programme with the Department of Public Works and a visit to Brazil undertaken by members of that department to study a similar initiative in Recife, the plans were scuppered. Eventually, through Microsoft United States, Microsoft South Africa was approached and asked to assist with identifying a suitable partner to deliver the programme.

### **Partnership agreement**

Microsoft SA approached SchoolNet SA and facilitated the current partnership between AED and SNSA as the implementing agency, with Microsoft (US) providing the funding for this project.

AED was responsible for drawing up a cost reimbursement sub-agreement between AED and SNSA under the Microsoft Award to AED for the funding of the Employability Project. This was signed by the SchoolNet SA Executive Director, Janet Thomson and Eric Rusten, Director of New Ventures, AED in September/October 2009. Attachment A of the agreement, Programme Description, sets out the objectives of the Employability Pilot Training Project - the *New Futures Programme*. In the section under objectives, it is stated that, "*AED, in partnership with SchoolNet SA and Microsoft SA will collaborate to implement the Microsoft funded youth employability project for unemployed graduates in Johannesburg SA.*"

Also contained in Attachment A is the description of principal responsibilities or 'scope of work' which sets out a detailed description of SchoolNet SA roles and responsibilities as well as those of AED and ADE-Brasil (a Brazilian NGO implementing a similar employability programme also under the aegis of AED).

### **Partner roles and responsibilities (what was planned)**

- SNSA was tasked with the primary responsibility for coordinating the programme. To this end, SNSA was tasked with the appointment of a Project Coordinator and with taking responsibility for the programme logistics such as recruiting staff and procuring a venue for the programme delivery.
- AED were to collaborate and support the SNSA NFP Coordinator to:
  - make the final determination around staffing needs;
  - provide a designated external consultant to assist with the "pedagogical coordination" of the programme; and
  - consult on developing the detailed job descriptions for the programme staff.
- AED staff were to collaborate with SNSA staff on designing and developing a NFP website.
- AED staff were to support SNSANFP staff to develop a detailed annual work plan.
- SNSA was given responsible for expanding the NFP partnerships by identifying and approaching local companies and organisations that would join/support the programme.
- SNSA was to separately contract ADE Brasil to provide an experienced staff member to assist with the preparation and delivery of a workshop in South Africa to support the NFP staff to implement the NFP project-based learning curriculum advocated by AED.
- The ADE representative from the US (with the ADE representative from Brazil) were to design and deliver the facilitator training.
- AED and SNSA staff to work closely together to plan and develop the project based learning curriculum, the training approach and the learning materials - the development of some model learning projects and a detailed work plan which describes what tasks will be undertaken and when they will be completed, are two key outputs that are identified in the contract.
- The NFP Coordinator, supported by AED was to develop the criteria for selecting the unemployed graduates to participate in NFP and to recruit them.
- The AED and ADE-Brasil staff members were to provide general support and guidance regarding the implementation of the e-mentoring component of the NFP delivery. This was to include:

- assistance with recruiting a person to be the NFP eMentoring Coordinator;
  - initial training as well as ongoing, on-line, support to the NFP eMentoring Coordinator;
  - support with selecting the eMentors; and
  - assistance with the development of an eMentoring handbook based on the English translation of the eMentoring Handbook created by ADE-Brasil.
- Online meetings between the NFP staff in South Africa, AED (USA) and ADE-Brasil were to take place from time -to- time as necessary.

In summary, the AED and ADE – Brasil staff members were contracted to provide significant guidance, monitoring and support to the NFP staff, in particular, in the field of curriculum design and delivery, pedagogic support and e-mentoring training and support.

## **Programme aims**

The programme aims are to enable every participant to gain:

- a strong foundation across a broad range of ICT skills - to troubleshoot, diagnose and fix simple to complex computer problems including those that plague hardware, networks, software and communication systems; and
- soft skills to enable youth to navigate the world-of-work and search for and secure entry level ICT technical support positions or to start their own ICT technical support businesses.

These aims are to be achieved by:

- developing, testing and refining a demand-driven ICT employability programme for youth that can be sustained and scaled up in South Africa; that
- employs an integrated mix of learning activities including ICT skills, life and employability skills, work place readiness, entrepreneurship, electronic mentoring and internship activities, the programme aims to enable youth to gain the skills, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours that are essential for securing quality employment in the 21st Century.

## **Programme method**

The method used for programme delivery, was one advocated by AED, Project Based Learning (PBL). The principles that inform this delivery approach include the notion that:

- learning focused on real-world problems captures students' interest and provokes serious thinking as the students acquire and apply new knowledge in a problem-solving context.



- the teacher plays the role of facilitator, working with students to frame worthwhile questions, structuring meaningful tasks, coaching both knowledge development and social skills, and carefully assessing what students have learned from the experience.
- as far as is possible, the programme seeks to simulate the world of work and result in learners developing products that demonstrate mastery of relevant skills, abilities, and behaviours.

## **Elements of Project Based Learning**

Rigorous Project Based Learning (PBL):

- is organized around an open-ended *Driving Question* or *Challenge*. These focus students' work and deepen their learning by centring on significant issues, questions and/or problems.
- creates a need to know essential content and skills. PBL begins with the vision of an end product or outcome which requires learning specific knowledge skills and values thus creating a context and reason to learn and understand the information/concepts, master the skills and appropriate relevant values. (As opposed to input and then application).
- requires critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication. Use higher-order thinking skills. Learn to work as a team and contribute to a group effort. They must listen to others and make their own ideas clear when speaking, be able to read a variety of material, write or otherwise express themselves in various modes, and make effective presentations. These skills, competencies and habits of mind are often known as "21st Century Skills"
- allows some degree of student voice and choice. Students learn to work independently and take responsibility when they are asked to make choices. The opportunity to make choices, and to express their learning in their own voice, also helps to increase students' educational engagement.
- incorporates feedback and revision. Students use peer critique to improve their work to create higher quality products.
- results in a publicly presented product or performance. What you know is demonstrated by what you do, and what you do must be open to public scrutiny and critique.

## **New Futures Programme: Planned content**

The programme content was divided in to four key areas, these are:

1. Technical skills
- 2a. Social empowerment/employability/general skills
- 2b. Navigating the world of work
- 3a. Exploring entrepreneurship and starting a business

### 3b. Personal finance literacy

#### 4. eMentoring

The content reflected below is not intended to be exhaustive, rather, it is illustrative of the type of content that was *planned* for this programme in the four focus areas.

### **Technical Skills**

- Understanding Computer Hardware
- Understanding and Installing Operating System Software
- Understanding, installing and updating Office Application Software (client and online applications)
- Understanding, finding, evaluating and using utility software applications
- Introduction to and practicing troubleshooting
- Supporting the Operating System
- Supporting Networked Computers
- Supporting security needs
- Performing routine maintenance

### **Social empowerment/employability/general Skills**

- Business presentation skills
- Professional communication skills
- Business writing skills
- Research – data collection and interpretation
- Interviewing skills
- Customer service
- Planning skills
- Team work
- Conflict resolution
- Other 'soft' skills such as critical thinking, time management, and networking.

### **Navigating the world of work**

- Market opportunity mapping
- Prepare an employability plan
- Determine and define what you are passionate about
- Discover what employers want in the way of skills, abilities, attitudes and behaviors

- Prepare a compelling resume
- Professional interview skills
- Find perspective employment opportunities
- Participate in professional public presentations
- Learn to be a professional.

### **Exploring entrepreneurship and starting a business**

- Government programmes to support entrepreneurs
- Government regulations in relation to setting up a small business
- Create a business plan and new business budget
- Create a marketing plan and build a market for a new business' services and goods
- Sustain a new small business
- Effective communication using a variety of communication forms
- Organisational and time management skills
- The importance of maintaining good moral character
- The value of a positive mindset and ways to develop this.

### **Personal finance literacy**

- Personal finance literacy self assessment
- Create a personal budget using MS Excel
- Create a list of expense types
- Create a personal savings / investment plan
- The difference between simple and compound interest on savings over time
- Issues of risk, inflation, taxes, etc in relation to financial investment
- The mechanisms of securing a loan for personal and business use
- Set up and manage different types of bank accounts.

### **eMentoring**

Each participant is to be allocated a mentor for the duration of the course to participate in regular weekly online discussions and email contact. It was intended that these sessions would be guided by the weekly programme topic or theme or other topic deemed relevant by the eMentoring coordinator.

## **Programme delivery arrangements**

**The pilot programme was designed up to run in two phases.** The duration of each phase was set at five months, even though, in other countries, similar programmes were run over a longer period of time (typically over a period of eight months) budgetary constraints dictated the programme duration in South Africa.

The participants were required to attend the programme five days a week from 08h30-16h00. Generally the programme was structured so that new Learning Projects were introduced in the morning sessions, while in the afternoon, the participants had the opportunity to work in groups/teams doing research and preparing their Learning Project presentations for the following day.

Microsoft provided each participant with a laptop for daily use for the duration of the course.

The programme was delivered at the Sci Bono Science and Technology Centre where SchoolNet managed to negotiate the use of a venue for delivery of the programme for a nominal rental.

# Summary Results

## Programme Planning

### Setting up the Programme

#### Funding

##### Budgetary constraints

A quarter of the total pilot programme budget had been spent by staff from the Department of Public Works on the study trip to Brazil. The constrained budget has resulted in a number of cost cutting strategies having to be deployed in the implementation of this programme.

SNSA was therefore forced to cut the duration of the programme. Instead of each phase being eight months, the first pilot phase was cut down to five months and the second was cut down to four months, resulting in the delivery of a significantly truncated course.

While it had been hoped to secure a rent - free venue for the delivery of the programme, this proved not to be possible. In the end a nominal rental was negotiated and the programme was implemented at the Sci Bono Discovery Centre.

Participants in the first pilot phase were provided with a stipend to cover their transport costs to and from the training venue. It was not possible to do this in the second phase, the second group of participants were provided with a stipend only for the two weeks that they did their job shadowing experience.

#### Time frames

##### Constrained time frames

It had originally been hoped that the first phase pilot programme (**NFP 1**) would begin in August 2009, but delays in finalising a suitable training venue and the availability of the AED consultant and ADE – Brasil programme director who were to guide and support the programme implementation, caused significant delays. The facilitator training and programme planning got underway on 5 October 2009 once the AED and ADE-Brasil consultants had arrived in Johannesburg. The first phase of the pilot programme itself started eleven (working) days later on 20 October 2009.

Resulting from the constrained time frames, a number of steps in the planning process happened differently to the way in which they had originally been conceptualised. SNSA had no option but to proceed with the programme planning and implementation of a number of necessary logistical steps without the contractually agreed support from AED and ADE-Brasil.

The programme staffing arrangements were made and the selection of participants for phase one went ahead.

The time allocated for training the programme facilitators, for introducing the new *Learning Project* method and for developing the programme curriculum, was severely truncated.

The second phase of the pilot got underway in March 2010, the second group starting before the first programme had been fully concluded meant that there was no time for “breather” between phases.

## **Staffing arrangements**

### **Lack of academic leadership**

Having been contracted to deliver the NFP, SNSA advertised and filled the positions of Programme Coordinator by 20 July 2009. The incumbent was to take responsibility for overseeing the NFP – the Youth Employability Project. The Programme Coordinator’s key responsibilities included the appointment of additional staff, providing strategic leadership, project management, contribution to the project work plan, recruit and select unemployed graduates, establishing support and monitoring mechanisms to measure participant progress and quality assure training.

Despite the contractual agreement that AED would provide support and guidance around the programme staffing requirements and staff job descriptions, this did not happen. Once the Programme Coordinator was on board and in the interests of time, SNSA went ahead and appointed a project administrative assistant and three facilitators. The ICT technical skills facilitator was seconded from SNSA. One facilitator was appointed to take responsibility for employability and soft skills. The other facilitator was to focus on coordinating the e-mentoring component of the programme.

The three facilitators have all had extensive experience in facilitation in the education and training spheres however, no one in the team had had experience in curriculum design and development. The Programme Coordinator has a background in Social Work with great project management and administrative experience in the development field, but with very little educational experience and no curriculum development or pedagogic experience. For this reason, the partnership with AED / ADE-Brasil was seen to be critical, the NFP team looked to AED for academic leadership, but as shall be noted below, after the first eleven or so days, this was not provided.

### **Participant selection**

Contractually it was agreed that the NFP Coordinator would be supported by AED to develop the criteria for selecting the programme participants. This however did not occur.

Microsoft SA (MS SA) offers a programme for IT graduates called *Student to Business*. This is an internship programme that MS SA has set up with a number of industry partners to support up skilling of IT graduates. For the **first NFP** intake, SNSA was given access to the MS SA database of young people who had applied to be part of the *Student to Business* internship programme, but who had not succeeded in securing a place for themselves on it.

SNSA sent out emails to everyone on this MS SA Student to Business database advertising the NFP. For the first phase intake approximately 250 emails were sent out. Key requirements stipulated were that candidates should:

- Have a diploma or equivalent NQF Level 5 qualification (no field specified);
- Have a desire to work in the ICT field;
- Be unemployed;
- Be between 22-26 years old; and should have
- A solid set of intermediate computer and Internet skills including the following:
  - Knowledge of and ability to use windows OS and/or Linux;
  - Knowledge of and ability to use productivity software including word processing and spread sheets (either MS or Open office);
  - Knowledge of and ability to use the Internet with different browsers, navigating the Web, using a search engine, downloading files, and knowledge about basic internet security, etc.
  - Have and be able to use an email account, either a web based account or a server account.
  - Knowledge of and ability to use instant messaging and other social networking software.

As part of the first selection process, the NFP staff checked the NQF (National Qualifications Framework) level of the applicants qualification, but this was not always successful as in some instances the providers did not know the course level (or possibly the course were not actually registered on the NQF). If the applicant was thought to have the 'right qualification', the other criteria were assessed, including the applicant's motivation letter. English language levels were also considered.

Twenty one programme participants were selected in this way. In this first intake, the range of young people that were admitted into the programme proved to be wide. Five more participants joined the programme as a result of hearing about it from diverse sources. The participants' profile in the pilot project reflected very uneven qualifications and abilities. Some had attended private provider training that added up to a few weeks, while others had two year certificates/diplomas in IT. One or two were graduates from a University of Technology while a few of the participants had no IT training what so ever.

The participants for the **second intake** were much more carefully selected. Their IT qualifications were more carefully scrutinized, each candidate was interviewed and also required to complete a written task. Not all came to the programme through MS SA, the first phase pilot enjoyed favorable publicity and some participants had got to hear about the programme through the media or by word of mouth.

## **Participant Contracts**

All participants were required to sign a NFP “*Rules of Engagement and Personal Commitment*” form which spelt out various agreements pertaining to the delivery of the programme and the responsibilities of the participants and the facilitators. The requirements in the first phase were, however, rather broadly formulated and did not spell out specific details regarding the expectations of the participants in respect of regular attendance, general professional conduct and work requirements. This was largely remedied in the second phase of the pilot implementation.

## **Facilitator orientation and curriculum planning**

### **No time to design**

Due to the time constraints highlighted above, the orientation activities for the NFP facilitators mediated by the AED and ADE-Brasil consultants took place in the ten or so days immediately preceding the commencement of the NFP.

The time allocated for the programme preparation ahead of phase one was very pressurized. The NFP team generally felt the time allocated to planning and preparation was insufficient for the task of designing and developing the Learning Project – based curriculum activities, support materials and programme assessment strategy. There was also no time to get to grips with the new proposed methodology.

Input on project based learning was provided by the consultants; two model Learning Projects were provided by the consultants as exemplars for the team and two were developed by the facilitation team with the consultant’s support.

As part of the ten day preparation for the delivery of the NFP 1, a two day ‘test session’ was run with a group young people during which the AED Consultant facilitated a debriefing process reflecting on the test sessions and on how they had been facilitated.

The second time around, a lot of the ground work had been covered and a basic curriculum foundation had been laid. The facilitators had experience of what had worked and what had not worked and were able to refine the various learning projects. However the lack of a break between the delivery of the two phases of the pilot meant that there still was not sufficient time to really stand back and reflect on the process as a whole, on the scaffolding and sequencing of the learning programme.

### **Lack of support and engagement with programme design and delivery**

Overall, the facilitation team felt that they had not had sufficient support in the areas of curriculum design and pedagogic approach. No further support from AED for the Learning Project development was forthcoming after the initial ten day training period.

A number of the programme components that had been contractually agreed to, were not addressed by the AED and ADE-Brasil consultants, not during the initial training, nor later during the course of the programme delivery. In particular, the agreement that “*the AED and the NFP facilitators would work closely to plan and develop*



*the project based learning curriculum, the training approach and the learning materials...* never materialized. Neither did the consultants support the preparation of a *“detailed work plan”* also set down in the contract.

The NFP facilitator tasked with coordinating the e-mentoring, had some email/skype contact with the ADE – Brasil consultant and another staff member from that project. Language barriers however created communication limitations, the support was therefore limited and not *“ongoing”* as set out in the contract.

No support was provided with selecting the e-Mentors.

The commitment of AED and ADE-Brasil to provide *“assistance with the development of an eMentoring handbook based on the English translation of the eMentoring Handbook created by ADE-Brasil”* was only partially met. A Google translation of the Brazilian version of the Handbook - Portuguese to English - was provided. The translation was however highly flawed and not suitable for use. It was not possible to adapt the Handbook to the South African context as had been agreed. Instead, the Handbook had to be completely reworked. This was done with assistance from SchoolNet that had previously developed an online training course for mentors. Material from the SchoolNet Educator Development Network programme was used as a basis for developing a mentoring guide.

During the interview held with Eric Rusten on 9 October 2009 (during the facilitator training workshop) he spoke of *“ongoing online professional support for the facilitators”*, he also spoke of sending key readings to the facilitators. However, soon after leaving Johannesburg, the AED consultant stopped responding to emails sent by the NFP Coordinator and all professional support from the AED US office staff ceased. Efforts made by the NFP Coordinator to try to make contact with the designated AED Consultant or to enlist some support from other staff members at AED in the US failed to bear fruit.

None of the NFP team members have had any curriculum development and programme design experience, the absence of academic leadership and support in this project was therefore a serious lack.

Given the above, it is a pity that the project management decided against using a locally identified curriculum consultant to assist in the overall curriculum planning. Such an intervention could have been most beneficial to the programme.

## **Expanding the programme support base**

### **Small, but positive benefits derived from building the programme support base**

The NFP Coordinator acted proactively to broaden the programme partnership base in South Africa. While significant additional funding needed to sustain the programme beyond July 2010 was not secured, the coordinator did succeed in enlisting some support for the programme – both financial and in kind. Microsoft SA was a natural choice of company to approach, they have supported the NFP by lending laptops for the participants to use for the duration of both phases of the pilot programme.

The Sci-Bono Discovery Centre was approached for a venue for the programme delivery. The Sci-Bono Discovery Centre has as its key aim to support the development of science and technology by improve learning in maths, science and technology and making learning in these subject areas “...*more accessible, enjoyable and challenging and linking school learning to the world outside the school classroom...*” It also provides career education and counselling, particularly in Science and Technology related areas. To this extent, its aims resonated positively with the objectives of the NFP.

Being located at Sci Bono created an opportunity for some input from the Centre staff. In particular, the staff at the Sci Bono Careers Guidance Centre provided input into two, half day sessions, on *Curriculum Vitae* writing. They also conducted role play interviews with the programme participants. The centre offers a range of career mentoring services which may be of practical assistance to anyone seeking employment. Some participants made use of these services, taking the opportunity of setting up formal one-on-one appointments with the staff of this centre.

## **Programme delivery**

### **Introduction**

Prior to the commencement of the formal programme delivery, a weekend ‘Outward Bound’ camp was held as part of a team building exercise for the 21 participants of **NFP 1**. Financial constraints prevented the participants of **NFP 2** from participating in this sort of camp. Instead, a one day orientation programme was held in Johannesburg prior to the commencement of the programme delivery.

For the NFP 1 participants, formal programme delivery started on 20 October 2009 and ended in March 2010. The programme started with a session focusing on the participant’s expectations. The positive atmosphere and high levels of participation witnessed during this session was evidence of the benefits derived from the outward bound experience.

The rushed and poorly supported programme preparation, described above, resulted in the facilitators having to prepare their sessions on a weekly basis, rather than having had time to plan and design the programme ahead of time. While the programme facilitators need to be commended for managing to work in this way, the lack of proper planning did to a certain extent undermine the coherence of the programme and compromise scaffolding of new skills, knowledge and attitudes – **especially in NFP 1**.

### **Model of delivery**

#### **Learning projects**

As stated above, the programme was delivered over a period of five months - **NFP 1** and four months for **NFP 2**. Participants attended the programme sessions for six hours a day, five days a week. In general, the participants would spend between one

and two days on a Learning Project. The delivery format basically followed these steps:

- The facilitators provided new input and discussion in plenary to guide the scope of the participant's research on a particular topic
- Some sessions also included facilitated use of games, role play and presentation of case studies.
- The participants then break up into teams to research and write up the information on the topic of the Learning Project
- Teams present Learning project findings in plenary
- Reflection and consolidation of learning in plenary.

Learning Projects were generally designed to focus on either hard or soft skills. During the **NFP 1**, there was little attempt to integrate both, some attempts at integration were made during the second phase of the programme delivery (**NFP 2**).

### **Guest speakers and visits**

Over and above the regular Learning Project designed by the NFP team and formal inputs from staff members at the Sci-Bono Careers Counselling Centre, delivery in both the first and second pilot programme phases was enriched by the participation of a number of guest speakers. The list provided is illustrative and is by no means meant to be a comprehensive list of all speakers:

- Annette Kinnear of Irie Inspiration – author of *Your Career, Your Life*. She spoke about managing your career, setting goals and sticking to them, and shared her personal journey with the group.
- Angel Jones – founder of the NGO, Homecoming Revolution and Creative Director at Morris Jones & Co an award winning advertising company. As an entrepreneur, she spoke about her own story and some key things to bear in mind when wanting to start one's own business; how to keep persevering despite challenges.
- Barry Brookstein – owner of Children's Technology Workshop - part of a global company focused on the development and delivery of hands-on, applied-technology curriculum. Barry spoke to the group about the history of the NFP (which he had initially introduced to the national Department of Public Works) and about skills that he believes are important for surviving in the workplace.
- Omashani Naidoo – Project Manager at SchoolNet. She facilitated a session on financial literacy and personal budgeting.
- Omphile Lefenya – one of the participant's 'private' mentors (i.e. he was her mentor already, had nothing to do with the programme, but wanted to come and speak to the group). He shared his personal story around being an entrepreneur.
- A presentation was also made by Kalleo – a company that is involved in developing online and mobile learning tools i.e. teaching and learning through the use of mobile phones. This project was especially mentioned by a number of participants as a highlight during the programme midterm internal evaluation.

- A number of participants also referred to the presentation made by Toastmasters and the visit to Microsoft as highlights in the programme delivery.

### **eMentoring (across whole pilot)**

Parallel to the delivery of the NFP formal classroom-based sessions, the eMentoring process has been a very important component of the NFP. The NFP facilitator tasked with coordinating the eMentoring, identified a range of suitably experienced people to mentor the programme participants. Advertisements were circulated amongst a cross section of companies and organizations. People who volunteered to be mentors ranged from upper level management staff at one of South Africa's largest engineering companies and a financial director at a large bank, through IT specialists and entrepreneurs running their own businesses, to Human Resource and Information Managers. In total 33 mentors participated in the two phases of the pilot project. Six mentors from **NFP 1** also volunteered their services for **NFP 2**. Those who had agreed to be mentors, were asked to provide a profile detailing personal and professional qualifications, experience and interests. The NFP participants were also required to prepare a profile, also providing the information about themselves in the same range of categories. The profiles were used as a basis for matching the mentors and mentees as well as possible.

The mentors and mentees were required to communicate online via an instant messaging application, such as Skype, regularly for half an hour weekly. Additional communication by email and telephone was also encouraged. Almost all the mentors met at least once in a face-to-face meeting with their mentees.

Given the wide range of qualifications, experience and interests that characterized this group of mentors and the range in of experience and abilities of the mentees, it is to be expected that the content and nature of the mentoring process varied greatly from one instance to another. In some instances the focus was clearly and necessarily on a soft skill such as communication, while in another instance it may have been on workplace protocols and etiquette or on particular hard skills.

At the end of the programme both mentors and mentees completed online evaluation questionnaires.

Overall the eMentoring component was well managed by the NFP facilitator. Mentoring guidelines were given to the mentors at the outset and weekly up dates on what was happening in the programme were also provided.

The majority of participants felt that they had gained greatly from the mentoring process and that his component was a key strength of the programme.

### **Work based experience: Job shadowing**

Although job shadowing opportunities had been planned, it was not possible to implement these during the first phase of the pilot programme (**NFP 1**). The first group therefore did not have direct work-based experience. However, arrangements were made for the **NFP 2** participants to do two weeks of job shadowing. Like with

the mentoring process, a range of different companies and organizations were approached to host the **NFP 2** participants for the job shadowing component.

Guidelines setting out what was expected were sent out to all companies and organizations participating in the job shadowing process. The programme participants were required to sign contracts committing themselves to professional conduct during their job shadowing experience and well as an indemnity agreement in case of workplace injury.

The job shadowing experience was split into two block periods of a week each and implemented towards the end of the **NFP 2**. After the first week, the participants returned to attend their regular programme sessions at Sci Bono for two weeks. During this time debriefing and reflection on work experience was integrated into the programme. The participants then returned for a second week of job shadowing.

At the end of this period both the participants and the company manager were required to complete an assessment questionnaire. The participants had to rate themselves on their abilities to do various tasks in the workplace. The same set of questions were then given to the company manager who was then also required to rate the participants.

The success of this programme component was uneven. For some it was a great learning curve, but for those who ended up in companies and organizations which did not take the time to structure proper tasks or supervise the participants – the experience was less rich.

It was also not possible to cross refer the results of the assessment as only one or two managers took the time to do the assessment.

## **The implemented curriculum**

The technical skills (hard skills) and the more social empowerment/ employability skills required for navigating the world of work were generally well addressed in the programme delivery. Exploring entrepreneurship, starting a business and personal finance literacy – aspects of the original planned curriculum content for this programme - were only touched on and not very fully explored. Other components such as developing a business plan and developing a budget, creating a marketing plan and sustaining a small business, were not dealt with at all. There were a number of reasons for this. First, was the time constraint created by the shortened programme, second, was the general low skill level of the participants and the very heterogeneous nature of the **NFP 1** group which required a slow pace of delivery. Third, there was consensus in both the **NFP 1 and NFP 2** groups that they needed some work experience before embarking on any possible self employment venture, therefore, all content to do with establishing a small business was left out of the programme.

A key recommendation from **NFP 1** mid term evaluation report had been that more emphasis be given to the hard skills, that ICT related activities should be allocated more time on the time table than the soft skills. The NFP facilitators report that this recommendation was implemented in **NFP 2**.

## Programme support materials

Typically, in many of the sessions, Power Point presentations were used to present new information – some developed by the facilitators, some down loaded from the web. Overall, this method appears to have been used more during the delivery of the soft skill sessions than during the delivery of the hard skill sessions. In one hard skill session observed (5 February 2010 during the second phase of the pilot delivery) the primary and secondary questions were written up and stuck on the wall, but it did not appear that these were stored for future reference. In many cases activity sheets were prepared by the facilitators and handed out to the participants.

All presentations, including those made by guest speakers were up loaded onto the Windows Live project platform for the participants to access. The type of materials made available both by the NFP facilitators and by guest speakers cover a wide range e.g. readings on Bloom's taxonomy; a Google Guide to making web searchers easier; South African legislation such as the 'Basic Conditions of Employment'; an article on market mapping; inputs on 'making a good impression'; an article on critical thinking; a Blog written by an unemployed B Com graduate from the University of Cape Town; exemplars of CVs; assessment rubrics and so on.

However the majority of participants did not take the opportunity of down loading and keeping these resources. Nor did any of them take up the offer made by the programme facilitators of making the materials available on a compact disc. The facilitators reported that the ring files provided to the participants for handouts, were also not used for storing hard copies. It's however not clear whether the participants had easy access to printing facilities.

The above information, throws into question that fact that most participants, in both phases of the pilot programme, commented in the final evaluation on the usefulness of material handouts for reference purposes.

Overall, the materials that were made available at the end of the **second phase of the pilot** for the evaluation were assessed to be fit for purpose. The content is up to date and relevant and the quality of course notes and the readings selected is good, however these appear to have been prepared on an *ad hoc* basis. Although no resources related to the hard skills component of the NFP were provided for the evaluation, it is reported that the facilitator made copies of the *Microsoft Partners in Learning Help Desk Manual*<sup>2</sup> available for reference purposes.

## Assessment

In both the hard and soft skills components, evidence has been provided of checklists used for specific tasks as well as rubrics designed against which to assess the participant's delivery of particular presentations of tasks. However, these appear to

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.schoolnet.org.za/PILP/helpdesk/index.htm>

have been used on an *ad hoc* basis and no evidence of a systematised assessment strategy has been presented.

The lack of an integrated assessment strategy is a key weakness of **both phases of the pilot** programme. The requirement that the participants produce a digital portfolio of evidence was discussed with the AED consultant, but was not implemented. The lack of academic leadership and programme/curriculum design expertise in the NFP team and the lack of programme monitoring and support by the AED consultant are factors that have may have contributed to the absence of a systematised approach to assessment.

## **Programme logistics**

### **The venue**

An unplanned positive consequence of locating the NFP at Sci-Bono included the fact that some of the staff from the Sci-Bono Careers Guidance Counselling Centre were able to offer some input on writing CVs and on interviewing techniques as part of the NFP course delivery. But unfortunately the use of this venue also came with its own constraints.

### **No fixed teaching space**

Sci Bono was unable to provide a dedicated venue for **the duration of the pilot** programme. The room allocated was sometimes needed for other purposes and there were occasions when the whole class had to move at short notice to another room, occasionally in the middle of a session. Not having a 'fixed or permanent home' for the programme was unsettling in a number of ways including the fact that the facilitators could not store their equipment in this room and could also not set up any permanent displays.

### **Poor internet connectivity**

Another and possibly bigger problem, caused by using this venue **throughout the pilot** programme delivery, has been the ongoing struggle with internet connectivity. The participants were using 3G cards to connect to the internet through the SchoolNet Server - for the entire duration of the pilot, severe disruptions in internet connectivity impacted negatively on the programme delivery. Especially given that this programme relied so heavily on web based research tasks, the interruptions and delays fueled frustrations amongst both facilitators and participants. This problem also impacted negatively on the e-mentoring process, which obviously relied on good connectivity. It appears that this is a problem with the Sci Bono Centre building itself, it was noted that cell phone reception in the building is also problematic.

### **Staffing arrangements for programme delivery**

In all the sessions observed all three facilitators were present. One facilitator was leading the session and the other two chipped in as and where necessary, making a helpful contribution to the session. Collaborative or team teaching can be harnessed positively, and may be used especially well in a context like the **NFP 1**, where the

participant group was very heterogeneous. In such groups, where certain individuals need more support than others, it is useful to have more than one facilitator to move between the groups and offer support.

It must however be noted, that in the delivery of **NFP 2**, it is reported that in general, only two facilitators were in attendance during most sessions.

Deployment of staff, does however need to be properly planned so as to make the most efficient use of the human resources available.

Overall the staffing arrangements for the development and delivery of the pilot programme appear to be a little excessive.

## **Participant's conduct during the programme**

### **Phase One: NFP 1**

During the sessions observed, a number of worrying behaviours were noticed among the participants of **NFP 1**. These include high levels of absenteeism, lack of punctuality and poor cell phone etiquette. In both the midterm and final internal evaluations, a number of participants made reference to the poor conduct of their peers. Theft of equipment was highlighted as a problem by both the facilitators and a number of the participants.

#### **Lack of punctuality and high absenteeism**

During the observation of sessions on 5, 19 and 20 February 2010, participants arrived in dribs and drabs up to an hour-and-half late. On the 5<sup>th</sup>, only 10 participants had arrived by the time the session started at 09h10, by 10h30 another six had sauntered in.

In response to the question, "identify three negative aspects of the programme", some participants cited the "late coming" of their peers as a negative in their final internal programme evaluation.

Attendance registers covering only the period 20 October – 20 November 2009 were supplied to the evaluator, it was therefore not possible to check overall absenteeism rates. However, during the session observations conducted for the external evaluation, it was clear that absenteeism rates were quite high in the latter part of the programme delivery. On 5 February, five participants were absent and on 19 February 2010, six were absent.

#### **Note taking**

In four sessions observed (20 October 2009 and 5, 19 and 20 February 2010) the majority of participants were not taking their own notes during the session.

#### **Classroom conduct**

In the first phase end internal evaluation, six or 31% of the participants ( 6 out of the 19 that completed the end term evaluation forms) complained about the "disorder and /or disrespect in the class" and the fact that some participants "laughed at, or, mocked others" while they were trying to answer questions or do their presentations.



## Security/theft

The reported theft of three laptops, a camera and two cell phones from the programme venue raised serious questions about the behaviour of the participants, their readiness to enter the world of work and ability to act responsibly and ethically in the workplace. Unhappiness in this regard was raised, not only by the facilitators but also by some participants in the final internal evaluation.

## Phase Two: NFP 2

Given a number of negative experiences encountered with the participants of NFP 1, the Midterm evaluation strongly recommended a much tighter process for participant selection for **NFP 2**. It was also recommended that a code of conduct (modelling behaviours deemed acceptable in the professional working environment) be developed collaboratively with the participants.

The tighter selection process was definitely implemented with good result in **NFP 2** with most, if not all, of the negative behaviours experienced in NFP 1 being obviated. The facilitators reported that this resulted in a much more positive atmosphere and a more enjoyable and constructive learning and teaching environment for all concerned.

## Programme quality assurance

Seven internal quality assurance mechanisms were conceptualized to monitor and evaluate the design and delivery of the NFP:

- Learning Facilitator Performance Standards were prepared;
- Online monitoring and support from AED and ADE-Brasil consultants; and
- Digital portfolios of evidence for all participants;
- Entry, mid term and programme-end internal evaluation questionnaire to be completed by the participants;
- Evaluation questionnaires to be completed by the mentors and mentees about the mentoring process;
- Assessment questionnaires to be completed by company managers and participants at the end of the job shadowing experience in **NFP 2**. (No job shadowing was done in **NFP 1**); and
- Weekly reflection sessions conducted by the facilitators with the participants.

An external formative evaluation of the first phase and a summative evaluation of both phases of the pilot were also planned and implemented.

**The Learning Facilitator Performance Standards** were prepared in draft form, but never finalized in the pilot. It is not entirely clear how they were intended to be used, however even in draft form they provide a useful guide for the facilitators to reflect

on the quality of their facilitation. These Standards were also used to frame the observations conducted by the external evaluator.

**AED Support:** As already mentioned above, the contractually agreed to online monitoring and support from the AED and ADE-Brasil consultants did unfortunately not materialize. Some formative feedback was offered by the external evaluator after observing some select sessions.

**Digital portfolios:** During initial discussions with Eric Rusten, he spoke of an on-line portfolio of evidence being produced by each participant. Pressure of time and lack of facilitator knowledge about how to manage these and lack of monitoring and support by the AED consultant, are the most probable causes for this aspect of quality assurance not being carried through in the pilot at all.

**Entry, mid term and programme-end internal evaluation questionnaires** were designed and given to the participants in **NFP 1** to complete. The response rate for the midterm evaluation was low - only 12 participants completed the evaluation forms. While the responses to the midterm evaluation questionnaires were read by the facilitators, it appears that they were not analysed systematically to provide immediate feed back into the programme design and delivery. The response rate for the programme end evaluation was 21.

It is not known whether a midterm evaluation questionnaire was administered to the **NFP 2** group. No results were received for this. An online, end of programme evaluation questionnaire was administered with a response rate of 14.

**Evaluation of the mentoring component:** In both phases of the NFP, both mentors and mentees completed evaluation questionnaires at the end of the mentoring process. Results from the first phase, **NFP 1** were not provided for evaluation purposes. The facilitators however reported that, overall, the implementation of the mentoring component in the first phase was less successful than in the second phase. This, they attributed to the undisciplined nature of many of the participants in the first intake.

At the end of the second phase, 10 of the 20 mentees (participants) and 7 of the 20 mentors completed the evaluation questionnaires. High rates of satisfaction with the process were registered by both the mentees and the mentors. Both grouping also attested to having greatly valued the process.

**Evaluation of job shadowing: NFP 2:** The participants were provided with evaluation forms in which they were required to rate themselves (on a five point scale) in terms of their perceived ICT skills, professional behaviour and communication skills. Looking through the evaluation forms, a clear trend emerges. Many of the participants have given themselves full marks for everything. Conversely, in a number of instances where the job shadowing experience was not relevant, the participants have filled in "not applicable".

Although each participating company had been sent an evaluation questionnaire to complete, unfortunately very few did so. It is therefore not possible to correlate the participants responses with those of company managers. However, in an attempt to elicit some feedback from the managers, one of the NFP facilitators followed up

telephonically. Overall, the staff in the companies that participated in the job shadowing commented on the fact that the NFP participants had behaved respectfully in the working environment and that they had gained a greater awareness of workplace cultures.

In the endline evaluation, three participants mentioned that they would have liked more job shadowing and two thought that they were more employable because of their job shadowing experience.

**Weekly reflections:** Additionally, the NFP team developed the idea of getting the participants to reflect on the week's programme by identifying 'hits' and 'misses' i.e. things the participants enjoyed about the week and things they didn't like. This happened every Friday afternoon. Later this activity became known as 'Ayoba' and 'Not Ayoba' i.e. cool / not cool. On Monday mornings the team would try to address the 'not Ayobas', in this way responding to programme strengths and weakness at a very immediate level. Although this may not have always been done consistently, it is wonderful mechanism for promoting responsiveness and quality in programme delivery. Unfortunately, it was not an activity that all **NFP 1** participants enjoyed.

**External formative evaluation of the first phase of the pilot:** The external evaluator presented and discussed verbal feedback with the NFP team and key recommendations were prepared for the external midterm evaluation. A full report contextualizing and elaborating on the key recommendations was also prepared.

## Overall quality of the programme

### Meeting participant's expectations

In responding to the question "briefly state what your main expectations of the programme were" in the programme end evaluation, 16 of the 19 participants (84%) of participants on the **NFP 1** highlighted the acquisition of technical/practical ICT skills/experience. Only two made reference to soft skills.

On **NFP 2**, 11 out of 14 (78%) respondents cited ICT skills and 5 out of 14 (36%) cited employability skills.

In response to the question, to indicate the extent to which participant's felt that their expectations were met by ticking a four point scale (where 1 = expectation not met, 2 = some what met, 3 = well met and 4 = expectations exceeded) the average result for **NFP 1** was 2.8, basically indicating satisfaction rates equivalent to "well met". For **NFP 2** the average result was still more positive at 3.5, indicating that the participants expectations had been more than well met.

## **Programme delivery**

The quality of the programme delivery has been found to be good. Methods used to deliver the programme were interactive, outcomes-based and Learning Project-based in line with the stated approach.

The facilitators are all very experienced and in general came across as knowledgeable about their areas of expertise, presented content in interesting and innovative ways and demonstrated commitment to the participants and the programme.

## **Programme facilitation**

Of the 19 participants that completed the programme end evaluation questionnaire for **NFP 1**, 15 or 79% of the respondents, commented positively on the facilitation of the programme. In **NFP 2**, 11 of the 14 or 78 % of the respondents also commented positively on the programme facilitation. They reported that the facilitators answered their questions clearly and in a helpful manner, that the facilitators knew the content, that the pace of delivery was appropriate and that the content was pitched at the right level. Participants from **NFP 2**, commented in particular on the fact that they appreciated being given individual support; that the facilitators were open and easy to approach; and that they taught in an interactive manner. Positive comments on the fact that the course was practical, rather than theoretical were also made. None of the participants from this group could think of a single negative aspect of the facilitation!

## **eMentoring**

A few participants in the **NFP 1**, noted that eMentoring as a highlight, but as mentioned above, overall the programme facilitators felt that the majority of the participants did not succeed in maximizing the potential benefits of the mentoring relationship by failing to take the process seriously.

**Some responses from the mentees on NFP 2:** Overall the second group found the mentoring experience very positive. Nine out of ten ( 90%) mentees that completed the online evaluation questionnaire, felt the process had been effective and all ten felt that they had received useful support from their mentors and all ten felt that the mentoring had enhanced their networking and professional relationships. In response to the question, "*in what ways did you grow?*" Some mentees reflected positive values in their responses, e.g:

- *I realized the importance of guidance*
- *I realized that successful people get there by their own hard work*
- *I realized that you need to be motivated*

When asked to identify specific skills they had acquired in the mentoring process, seven said *communication* and a number comment on the assistance received in *preparing their CVs*.

In general the mentees commented on being *supported to face disappointments*, being *motivated to face challenges*, *understanding the importance of being properly informed* and *gaining skills relating to successful negotiation of inter personal relationships*.

All ten said that wanted to keep in touch with their mentors after the programme had ended.

**Some responses from the mentors:** Seven out of twenty mentors completed the online evaluation questionnaire. All seven mentors (100%) said that the mentoring process had been valuable use of their time.

The mentors reported on a range of positive changes in their mentees. These include *improved communication skills, growth in confidence, having developed more realistic expectations, more structure and more critical thinking.*

Overall the mentors felt that the mentoring programme had been well coordinated. They all appreciated the weekly programme updates from the ementoring coordinator as this helped them to know what was going on in the programme / their mentee's life. Most of the mentors also appreciated receiving comments, successful activities, tips etc that had been circulated from other mentors. Most of the mentors thought that the online communication was a good idea and that it made the mentoring manageable for them, making time to meet face to face would probably not have been possible.

Nine of the ten mentors said that hey had learnt new mentoring strategies during the course of the NFP.

Most indicated that they would be happy to continue in a mentoring relationship with their mentees even after the NFP had ended. A few did however think that their mentees were not keen enough to do so.

**Suggestions made and concerns raised by mentors:**

- All the mentors felt that half an hour per week was not nearly sufficient time for effective mentoring – most suggested one hour as a minimum.
- A number of mentors suggested that it would have been nice to have some structured interaction with the other mentors. A mid term reflection and sharing meeting to meet each other was suggested.
- All the mentors commented on the frustration of the poor connectivity which made instant messaging difficult.
- A number of mentors commented on the fact that they had not really been supplied with sufficient information about the NFP and therefore did not fully understand the context.
- Five mentors noted that they did not really think that their mentees were 'eager enough to succeed', one mentor described her mentee as 'luke warm' and one used the term 'not desperate enough' to seize and make the most of the opportunities offered. These mentors felt that only 'truly hungry, career driven people' should be selected to be on the NFP.
- A number of mentors expressed their distress at not being able to offer their mentee employment. They felt that even if it had been explained to the mentees that the mentors were not going to offer them employment or facilitate employment, that there was none- the- less a huge expectation on the part of the mentee that this *would* happen.

## Programme highlights

When asked to “list three top highlights of the programme”, 11 respondents on **NFP1** cited ‘presentations/and or visitors inputs’; three said ‘soft skills’; four said the market opportunity mapping or MOM activities; three said ICT skills; and two said eMentoring.

On **NFP 2**, seven participants said that the job shadowing and the practical ICT work were programme highlights. Five participants cited the e mentoring and soft skills (especially presentation) as highlights.

## Programme benefits

All participants on **NFP 1** clearly felt that they had benefited significantly from both the hard and the soft skills that they had engaged with during the programme. ICT skills were mentioned in general with some participants highlighting work done on servers and one participant mentioning trouble shooting. Soft skills cited as key benefits of the programme include, communication skills, gaining confidence, team work, and presentation skills.

The **NFP 2** participants also were very positive about the benefits of the programme as a whole and also cited both hard and soft skills in their list of ‘*top 3 benefits*’. Nine of the fourteen cited ICT. A number of soft skills were also mentioned, these include: communication, presentation skills, critical thinking and confidence to speak in front of an audience.

## Programme weaknesses or negatives

Asked to list “three weak or negative elements of the programme”, the **NFP 1** respondent’s feedback can be largely clustered around five key issues. These are: perceived disrespect of the participants by the facilitators (cited by seven participants); complaints by participants regarding the poor behaviour of their peers including stealing. In this regard one respondent suggested that a code of conduct should be in place and another commented on the fact disruptive participants had not been reigned in by the facilitators (poor behaviour issues cited by five participants); three cited lack of money (stipend) as a problem; two respondents felt that there had not been sufficient focus on hard skills in the programme and three complained about not having a course programme ahead of time.

By contrast, the **NFP 2** respondents struggled to find any weakness in the programme. Six (43%) did not respond to this question. Three respondents said that the programme had been too short; one said that the job shadowing component had been too short and one said ‘sarcastic colleagues’ were a problem. Four of the fourteen (close on 30%) said that there were no negatives.

## **Participant's view of what should be kept/changed in the programme**

In responding to the question, *“what would you change and what would you keep in the programme?”* Most of the respondents in **NFP 1** focused on what they would want to change, rather than on what they would keep.

### **Features of the programme delivery that participants felt should be kept**

Two respondents (**NFP 1**) said they would keep the programme just as it is; two wanted the eMentoring component kept, and one each highlighted the positive contribution to the programme of teambuilding work, presentation skills and the MOM activities. The programme elements cited here do, to a large extent, resonate with the programme components mentioned under “programme highlights” above. The majority of the **NFP 2** respondents wanted to keep the programme just as it was.

### **Features of the programme delivery that participants felt should be changed**

In **both groups** a clear correlation exists between perceived programme weaknesses/negative aspects cited by respondents as being elements of the programme that should be changed. In the case of **NFP 1**, these include reigning in the poor behaviour of certain participants, providing a (greater) stipend and the inclusion of more hard skills in the programme. Having a programme for the whole course up front and ensuring reliable connectivity were also areas identified as needing improvement.

The **NFP 2** respondents commented on lengthening the programme and the job shadowing component.

### **Assessment of degree of hard and soft skill mastery**

Using a four point scale (where 1= inadequate, 2= adequate, 3 = well met and 4 = excellent) to rate the participant's own perception of the degree to which the NFP provided them with the hard and soft skills necessary for employment, the following results obtain in **NFP 1**. The average derived from the 19 participants that responded to this question pertaining to soft skills attained in the NFP is 3.7 - an excellent result. Perception of mastery of hard skills was lower at 3 (on the 4 point scale). While this is a satisfactory result, it appears to be consistent with the number of calls by the participants for more time spent on hard skills and more hard skills to be included the programme.

The issue of more time spent on hard skills was also underlined in the participant's comments during the **NFP 1** Focus Group interview.

The **NFP 2** responses were still more positive, 12 participants (86%) rated their soft skills as being 4 (on a 4 point scale) and 2 gave themselves a 3 point rating.

In relation to hard skills, 11 (79%) participants rated themselves at 4 and three rated themselves at 3.

As with the NFP 1 group, the **NFP 2** group also rated themselves a little higher on soft skills than on hard skills.

## **Programme success**

### **Participant's perception of their employability**

When asked to explain in the programme end evaluation questionnaire whether the programme participants felt that they were more employable after having completed the NFP, all the participants in **both phases (NFP 1 and NFP2)** responded positively. Key reasons provided by **NFP 1** respondents included, the fact that they felt that they could 'sell' themselves better; communicate better; and that overall they had more confidence. Some participants mentioned CV writing and interview skills. They also reflected on technical/hard skills acquired.

**NFP 2** respondents tended to give greater emphasis to the technical (hard skills) learnt and to the experience gained during their job shadowing. Soft skills were mentioned by four participants.

From this is clear that there were different experiences and perception of employability skills gained in the two groups.

### **Would you recommend the programme?**

When asked whether the respondents would recommend the New Futures Programme, sixteen (84%) of the **NFP 1** group and eleven **NFP 2** (79%) said that they would recommend the programme. Three of the NFP 2 group did not respond.

### **Programme completion rate**

At the start of the **NFP 1** programme there were 21 participants, five more participants joined the programme during the first couple of weeks after its commencement, making the total 26.

During the course of the programme, five dropped out, two because they had found employment, two, because they could not financially afford to continue and one – no reason given.

Twenty-one participants or 81% of the total number enrolled, completed the pilot programme.

In the **NFP 2** programme there were also instances of a couple of participants leaving and being replaced by others in the first few weeks of the programme. However the end result was that the programme started with 20 participants and ended with 20 participants, a 100% completion rate.



Programme retention and completion rates in both phases of the pilot have been excellent.

## **Employment, internships and learnerships**

At the time of preparing this report:

- Seven of the **NFP 1** and seven of the **NFP 2** participants have secured employment.
- Five **NFP 1** participants have secured internships.
- Two **NFP 1** participants have secured learnerships at the Department of Social Development as IT technicians.
- Four **NFP 2** participants are currently working in voluntary positions to gain further experience.
- One **NFP 1** and two **NFP 2** participants are known to still be seeking employment.
- The status of four **NFP 1** and six **NFP 2** participants is currently unknown.

## **Conclusion**

A more systematized approach to programme planning including planning of an integrated assessment strategy and a systematic approach to materials development, were noted as key areas that needing attention in the Midterm evaluation report. The overall results of both phases of the pilot indicate that the programme is basically of sound quality. It is also evident that many learnings and experiences gained in **NFP 1** were fed into the delivery of **NFP 2**, thus significantly enhancing the second phase of the pilot delivery. However, the issue of properly planning a systematised learning programme with an integrated assessment strategy and a coherent body of materials still applies.

Participants interviewed in both phases of the programme all endorsed the programme's relevance and spoke enthusiastically about its value. The **NFP 2** participants were even more animated about the value of the programme than their peers in the **NFP 1** had been.

Sixty seven percent (67%) of the **NFP 1** participants that completed the programme have managed to secure employment and/or a combination of employment with further skilling opportunities as in the case of the two learnerships and three internships (work-based learning positions). In all instances some income is being generated, thus successfully achieving one of the key objectives of the NFP.

Thirty five percent (35%) of the **NFP 2** participants that completed the programme are currently in employment.

Across both phases of the pilot this is a 51% employment rate.

Given the financial and time constraints experienced in setting up and delivering this programme and the lack of academic leadership and support caused by AED's non delivery on its agreements, the NFP team need to be congratulated on the success of

this pilot. Across both phases of the pilot a firm foundation has been laid. The team's openness to constructive criticism in the first phase (**NFP 1**) has meant that key recommendations made during the formative evaluation process and in the Midterm evaluation report were taken on board and the second phase (**NFP 2**) benefited greatly from a range of programmatic adjustments.

# Findings and Recommendations

## Overall Programme Strengths

The overall strengths of this programme are highlighted in the first part of this section.

### Quality of the NFP facilitation team

The team were pretty much thrown in the deep end, with little preparation and virtually no support during the delivery of the programme and yet, still succeeded in delivering a good quality programme. This can largely be attributed to the commitment and enthusiasm with which they engaged with the project and the participants, as well as to their sound professional knowledge and facilitation skills. This is a key success of this project.

### Participant's expectations well met

Despite the fact that a number of the **NFP 1** participants arrived at the programme with unrealistic expectations, the results of the focus group discussions and the internal evaluation questionnaire, show that the participant's expectations, were, largely well met. On the four point scale used in the evaluation questionnaire the result averaged out to 2.8 - with 3 on the 4 point scale equal to 'well met'.

Implementing a more careful selection process for participants of **NFP 2**, resulted in a better match between participants and programme expectations as well as a much more committed group overall. The average result for expectations met in this group was 3.5. A better result than in the first group was registered. This confirmed that the participant's expectations were *more* than well met.

### Overall good quality of the programme and its delivery

Overall the results pertaining to the evaluation of the programme delivery are very positive. Findings based on sessions observed in both phases, corroborate the results of the participant evaluation questionnaire. Seventy nine percent (79%) of **NFP 1** participants and seventy eight percent (78%) of **NFP 2** participants felt that the programme facilitation pace was appropriate, that the content was relevant and the content was pitched at the right level.

All participants cited a variety of programme highlights which ranged from the presentations made by the varied and relevant guest speakers through to new knowledge and skills in both the hard and soft skills offered in the NFP.

For a number of participants in **NFP 2** phase, the job shadowing experience was a highlight. For many, this experience vividly helped to crystalise the nature of

workplace culture and the requirements for successful engagement in a professional environment.

A number of participants from both groups, but more especially from the **NFP 2** group, also emphasised the value they derived from the e mentoring component of the programme. During the focus group interviews it became particularly clear that this element of the programme was very important in providing support, boosting confidence and generally pointing these young people in the right direction.

The project – based learning approach advocated and introduced by AED was well used and adapted to the context.

All participants clearly felt that they had benefited significantly from both the hard and the soft skills that they had engaged with during the programme.

When required to rate (on a four point scale, where 4 = excellent) the degree of their mastery of both hard and soft skills gained during the programme, the **NFP 1** participant's average result for soft skills was 3.7 (excellent) and for hard skills was 3 (well met). The **NFP 2** were even more positive, 12 participants (86%) rated their soft skills as being a 4 (excellent) and two participants gave a 3 rating (well met).

## **Programme success rate**

### **Participant's perception of their employability**

Responses to the programme end evaluation questionnaire confirm that the participants felt that they were more employable after having completed the NFP. Overall they felt that they could 'sell' themselves better; communicate better; and that they had more confidence. They also reflected positively on the technical/hard skills that they had acquired.

Sixteen (84%) of the **NFP 1** respondents said that they would recommend the New Futures Programme. In the **NFP 2** evaluation, eleven (of the fourteen) or 79% of the participants that did respond to this question in the end – evaluation said they would recommend this programme. Three main reasons cited were, the importance of the practical experience gained on this programme which was typically lacking in most college/ University of technology programmes; the acknowledgement of the importance of soft skills in making one more employable; and in general, the recognition that this programme helps in "closing the gap between the field of study and work".

### **Programme completion rate**

The completion rate of the first phase of the pilot (**NFP 1**) is high. Twenty-one of the original twenty six participants or 81% of the total number enrolled, completed the pilot programme.

The completion rate for **NFP 2** is also excellent. While there were one or two drop outs within the first couple of weeks of the second phase of the pilot, the participants who dropped out were immediately replaced by other young IT graduates who were

keen to get onto the programme. Once the group had stabilised in the first few weeks, the total number was 20. All 20 completed the programme, effectively resulting in a 100% completion rate.

### **Employment, internships and learnerships**

Of the 21 young people that completed **NFP 1**, 14 or 67% have been placed in employment or in an internship/learnership leading to further skilling and employment.

To date, 7 of the 20 or 35% of the **NFP 2** participants, have found employment, making the average across both phases of the pilot, 51% - a great achievement of this programme.

### **Recommendations for future programme delivery**

This section of the report deals with the detail of areas that need strengthening or that need to be thought about differently if the programme is to be offered again in the future. Recommendations are provided both for strengthening the programme delivery as well as for making it more efficient.

### **Programme Funding**

The limited budget available for this phase resulted in a number of constraints impacting on the programme implementation, key amongst these being the need to deliver a truncated version of the programme. Instead of an eight month programme, the programme was shortened to five months. The imperative to find a cheap venue resulted in the unforeseen consequence of poor connectivity which severely hampered smooth programme delivery. The programme was also forced to make use of laptops borrowed from Microsoft which limited the participant's access to the laptops to class times only. They had no access to computers after hours.

#### ***Undertake a costing exercise of the programme for appropriate funding***

*It is recommended that an accurate costing of the programme is undertaken now that the pilot has been completed so that funding of future programmes is adequate and sufficient time and the necessary resources are budgeted for.*

*If the recommendation of offering this programme using a blended approach is taken up (see section dealing with delivery model below) the costing will need to take cognizance of this approach. The initial outlay for self study (online or electronic) materials development will need to be factored into the costing, but in the long run personnel costs for delivery will be cut. Ideally, the cost of supplying each participant with a laptop or a system for making laptops available will also need to be considered.*

## Curriculum planning and facilitator orientation

The planning of the programme, design of learning projects, orientation of the project team and the delivery and the practical testing of new learning projects, was all condensed into the 10 days preceding the delivery of the first phase of the pilot (NFP 1.) This very rushed planning process, did to some extent, compromise the quality of the pilot programme, particularly the first phase. There was not sufficient time to design the programme nor was their enough time for the team to properly orientate themselves to the new proposed pedagogy or to the new content.

This situation was further exacerbated by the fact that there is no curriculum design experience in the team as a whole. Additionally, the mentoring and support contractually agreed to by AED and ADE–Brasil was not honoured. The team was thrown into the deep end; given the context, the results were still remarkably good. The second phase of the pilot implementation (NFP 2) provided an opportunity for the programme facilitators to consolidate much of the curriculum delivery, however there is still room for curriculum and delivery improvement.

A recent employability survey conducted by the MERSETA (Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA) in South Africa found that hard skills were the most highly valued by employers followed by, problem solving, teamwork and communication skills. For this reason it is also recommended that the balance between soft and hard skills be revisited.

### *Need for a formal curriculum review process*

*Curriculum review: It is recommended that a person/s with curriculum development expertise and experience be appointed to lead the programme review process and to provide support for the revision process. In particular, attention needs to be given to sequencing and scaffolding of content and to the planning of an integrated assessment strategy. The balance between soft and hard skills also should to be carefully considered. Over and above the question of time allocated to hard skills, a strategy for differentiated teaching needs to be implemented to meet the needs of a group where the skills and abilities of the participants are uneven.*

*Budgeting sufficient time to design a coherent programme and curriculum support materials: Sufficient time and money needs to be budgeted for the programme review process and to implement any curriculum revisions suggested for future programme delivery.*

## Programme support materials

Overall (in both phase one and two of the pilot) the materials developed and used in the delivery of this programme were assessed to be up to date, relevant and fit for purpose. The concern is that a coherent body of curriculum support materials was not put together – there are, for example, no materials for the hard skills component of this programme. Most of the materials are presented in power point format, some tools and checklists were also developed, however little consideration has been given to the provision of relevant readings. The support materials are not organised in a coherent and chronological way for easy access and reference by participants.

### ***Compile a comprehensive set of programme support materials***

*As part of the planning and preparation for the programme, it is recommended that a cohesive set of curriculum support materials are prepared.*

### ***Make materials available both electronically and in hard copy***

*Given that most participants, in this target grouping, do not have access to computers outside of the NFP, access to an electronic version of the materials only, is not useful. As well as making the materials available electronically, each participant should be provided with a file and hard copies of all the materials for future reference.*

### ***Course programme to be provided to participants***

*By the time this programme is offered again, the full course programme should be developed ahead of delivery and the day- to- day programme made available to all participants from the outset.*

## **Model of programme delivery**

While the current face-to-face programme delivery is a well tested and proven approach, it is personnel intensive with ideal facilitator to participant ratios being around 1:20. It is therefore suggested that it may be more efficient to explore a blended approach to delivery. This would allow for greater flexibility of delivery, cut down on the number of staff necessary and would potentially be good for delivery on a much larger scale.

Delivery of the learning-project based approach was generally divided into sessions dealing with either hard or soft skills. There was little or no evidence of integration of skills or content pertaining to both.

A weekly online mentoring session was included in the programme and towards the end of NFP 2, two weeks of job shadowing was structured for the participants.

### ***Adapt method of programme delivery from face- to- face to a blended approach***

*It is recommended for greater efficiency and possible up scaling, that the programme delivery method be changed to a blended approach. It is proposed that the option of delivering the soft skills component through distance education methods (online or electronically prepared on a CD) be thoroughly investigated and costed.*

*It is recommended that the hard skills component continue to be offered using a classroom-based, face-to-face approach.*

### ***Integration of hard and soft skills to simulate the workplace***

*In workplace contexts, it is likely that hard and soft skills will often be required simultaneously, it is therefore recommended that project –based learning scenarios are designed in which both hard and soft skills are integrated, e.g. solving a specific IT problem and communicating with the service provider and the staff of the company/organization for which the IT technician works.*

### ***Strengthen the e mentoring and job shadowing components***

*It is also recommended that the mentoring component be strengthened and clear guidelines be developed for the job shadowing component.*

## **Timeframes**

The NFP 1 programme delivery did not include a job shadowing component due to the time constraints. The NFP 2 programme delivery was further truncated from five to four months because of financial constraints.

### ***Extended timeframe for programme delivery***

*With appropriate funding, the time frame for the programme delivery may be extended. The positive value of job shadowing and the e mentoring component are well documented in this evaluation. Sufficient time for both these aspects should be allocated.*

## **Staffing arrangements**

### **Staff qualifications and experience**

The lack of curriculum/ programme development qualifications and experience in the NFP team and the failure of the AED consultant to provide the contractually agreed to support in this field (with the already mentioned time constraints) compromised the quality of the design of the programme (e.g. lack of integration and the lack of an assessment strategy).

### **Staff deployment**

The involvement of all three facilitators during the delivery of many of the sessions in the pilot programme can potentially be seen as positive as it meant that all the facilitators were equally immersed in the development and delivery process of this new programme. This approach clearly provided a positive learning opportunity for all those involved, however, it is not the most efficient method of course delivery as it is very human resource intensive.

### ***Clearly defined qualifications for staff and division of labour***

*It is imperative that the project leader have the requisite educational qualification to provide academic leadership in a programme such as this one.*

### ***Clearly defined approach to facilitation agreed to***

*If it is decided to offer this programme in the future still using face-to-face methods, it would be more efficient and cost saving to plan the session delivery to involve only one facilitator at a time providing for a ration of 1:20.*

*If team teaching is the agreed method of delivery for a particular session, careful planning and division of roles needs to occur upfront to maximize the benefits of collaborative facilitation. For groups of up to 30 participants, a maximum of two facilitators is required.*



### ***Rationalisation of staffing arrangements in current delivery model***

*It is suggested that future delivery of this programme may be possible with fewer staff members. If properly explored this option could lead to cost cutting.*

### ***Staffing considerations for blended delivery model***

*If the recommendation to investigate a blended approach to programme delivery is taken up, different staffing arrangement will need to be considered. This will include appropriate staff for:*

- *coordinating the programme, including the e mentoring and job shadowing components*
- *leading the curriculum revision process*
- *designing and developing the (online/electronic) self study soft skills materials*
- *online tutors*
- *a facilitator for the face- to- face delivery of the hard skills component.*

## **Participant contracts and code of conduct**

The recommendation made in the Midterm Evaluation Report (prepared at the end of NFP 1) that, *clear criteria and procedures for participant selection* should be implemented served to largely obviate the problem of participants with very uneven IT and language abilities in the second phase of the pilot - NFP 2. A structured interview procedure that included the participants having to complete IT and language assessment tasks was implemented.

However, despite the fact that the contracts between the programme organizers and the participants were strengthened for the second phase of the pilot (NFP 2) there is still room for improvement. They could still be more tightly aligned with the type of contract that is typically used in professional working environment.

***Develop contractual agreements that spell out the professionally aligned conduct, requirements and responsibilities of participants on the NFP.***

*Conditions of participation in the programme should be aligned with the type of conditions that are typically expected in the work place. These should include matters such as adherence to starting times, general professional conduct required, conditions applying to sick or other leave and ICT policy. If a stipend is offered, conditions pertaining to its disbursement need to be included in the agreement in the same way as any perks or allowances would be set out in an employee's conditions of service.*

***Code of conduct and agreed to disciplinary procedures***

*It is also recommended that in future programmes, a code of conduct and disciplinary procedures are agreed to. As the key purpose of this programme is the preparation of young people for employability, it is suggested that such a code be developed in line with professionally acceptable behaviour. Disciplinary procedures should be aligned to workplace procedures and practices. These should include details of lunch and tea breaks, cell phone etiquette and so on.*

*Clear channels for communication and grievance procedures need to be agreed to.*

*Such contracts should be presented to the participants for signing before the programme begins.*

*NFP facilitators should at all times model the type of behaviour that is expected.*

## **Programme delivery logistics**

### **Venue and connectivity**

The pros and cons of the Sci-Bono Centre venue are described in the results section of this report. While the inconvenience created by not having a fixed teaching space could be managed, the ongoing poor connectivity experienced with the use of 3G cards or modems at this venue was a serious problem that undermined the effective delivery of the NFP. Given the IT focus of this programme and the requirement that the participants to do a lot of research work on the internet, store and access documents on Windows Live and communicate with their mentors through instant messaging and email, the poor connectivity was a significant hindrance.

#### ***Need good connectivity for programme delivery***

*To successfully facilitate programme delivery, it is recommended that the matter of good connectivity receive serious consideration before embarking on the delivery of another programme.*

### **Equipment**

The free loan of laptops provided by Microsoft SA enabled the programme to be successfully delivered. However, lack of after hours access to laptops and internet connectivity also meant that the participant's work was restricted to the programme delivery hours (08h30-16h00) and no additional research, preparation work or communication with eMentors could be undertaken out of these hours.

#### ***Need to investigate options for supplying participants with laptops***

*If this programme is to continue in the long term, planning to address the logistical issues should be undertaken. This would necessarily include a budgeting exercise to assess viability.*

## **Quality assurance process and feedback loop**

### **Implementation of quality assurance processes**

A significant number of internal quality assurance mechanisms were planned and designed, but not all were implemented. The following were implemented:

- participant entry, midterm and end of programme online evaluation questionnaires;
- participant job shadowing self assessment questionnaires, but the company managers did not complete their assessments of the participants, it was therefore not possible to cross check the information;

- online evaluation questionnaires for the e-Mentors and mentees; and
- weekly reflections by facilitators with the participants on the delivery of the programme providing an opportunity for immediate feed back.

The following were not implemented:

- the learning facilitator performance standards were prepared but not implemented;
- The contractually agreed to support from the AED consultants was not forthcoming;
- On-line digital portfolios of evidence for participants were prepared.

The external midterm formative evaluation was conducted and feed back provided.

### **Quality assurance feedback loop**

Some of the quality assurance mechanisms have been implemented and the results followed up, others have been implemented, but without feeding the results back into the programme immediately, and some were never implemented.

The baseline questionnaire and the internal midterm and programme-end evaluations are all excellent mechanisms for monitoring quality, however it appears that the results were not systematically analysed or fed into the programme by the NFP team. The results of the programme-end evaluation have none-the-less been useful in this formative evaluation.

It also appears that the facilitator performance standards were not followed through on by the team, but were also used in the formative assessment as a framework for the session observations.

Key weaknesses in programme quality assurance were the lack of an assessment strategy and the failure to implement the planned portfolios of learning evidence and the failure of AED to honour its mentoring and support commitments. If these had been met, a number of challenges in this programme may have been obviated.

### ***Strengthen quality assurance mechanisms and the feedback of data into programme design and delivery***

- ***Determine and use learner profile data to inform programme design and delivery:*** *A baseline questionnaire was administered before the start of the pilot but the results were never analysed or used to inform the planning of the pilot programme. It is recommended that for each new programme, a baseline questionnaire is administer and used to determine the profile on the participant target group. The learner profile can then be used as the basis for refining the course design. For example, where the participant group is found to be very heterogeneous (as in the case of the NFP 1) appropriate strategies for differentiated teaching and learning need to be implemented to cater for varied skill levels.*
- ***Ensure feedback of all results into programme development:*** *The results of all internal evaluation questionnaires administered during the delivery of the programme should be analysed and the results used to inform any programme adjustments that may be necessary.*

- **Enlist support of education/curriculum specialist:** *Engaging the services of an appropriately qualified educationalist is recommended to enhance the quality of the programme design and implementation in the future.*
- **Implement participant portfolios of evidence:** *The design and implementation of an assessment strategy that requires each participant to prepare a portfolio of evidence is a key requirement for the successful implementation of any project-based learning programme. This is an important mechanism for monitoring participant performance and by extrapolation, the quality of the programme, it is therefore recommended that this be carried through in any following programme.*

## Conclusion

There were 2.8 million young people not in employment, education or training in South Africa in 2007 - two in five 18 to 24-year-olds - and the number could have soared to 3.2 million now. In a study<sup>3</sup> of post-school youth, researchers Charles Sheppard and Nico Cloete said this "is not only an educational problem but constitutes a social and economic disaster".

In the light of the above, the need for the New Futures Programme is unquestionable. In fact, this intervention is imperative. The stakeholders and the NFP team that have made this programme happen need to be commended for their vision and for their commitment in seeing this pilot programme through to its conclusion, despite numerous challenges.

The programme aims are to enable every participant to gain:

- a strong foundation across a broad range of ICT skills - to troubleshoot, diagnose and fix simple to complex computer problems including those that plague hardware, networks, software and communication systems; and
- soft skills to enable youth to navigate the world-of-work and search for and secure entry level ICT technical support positions or to start their own ICT technical support businesses.

In this two phased pilot these aims have to a very large extent been achieved. The pilot was intended to develop and test the ICT employability programme for youth. The programme employed a mix of learning activities including, ICT technical skills development, building life and employability skills, work place readiness and support through the electronic mentoring component.

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<sup>3</sup> From *SOUTH AFRICA: Scoping the need for post-school education*, an article by Karen MacGregor in the World University News, 20 December 2009 Issue: 106 - quoting the study [Responding to the Educational Needs of Post-School Youth](#) undertaken by Charles Sheppard and Nico Cloete of the Centre for Higher Education in Cape Town

The evaluation findings show that across both phases of the pilot 89% of the participants completed the pilot programme. The majority of those that completed the programme, reported that they consider themselves to be more employable than they were before they entered the programme. They feel that they have gained both the hard and soft skills necessary for employment and with that, the confidence to seek and again employment. At the time of writing this report, across both groups that completed the pilot programme, 51% have gained employment or have taken up learnership or internship positions (the spread across the two phases of the pilot is as follows: 67% of NFP 1 and 35% of NFP 2).

A finding of the mid term evaluation was that the many delays that preceded the start of the programme and the spending of a quarter of the programme budget on the study tour to Brazil, impacted negatively on its the roll out. When it eventually got going, the budget was constrained and the preparation was rushed. Additionally, the failure of the AED consultant to meet his commitment to monitor and support the programme implementation was also a major blow. The result was a lack of curriculum design capacity in the NFP team to engage with the programme planning process systematically enough.

It must however be noted that implementing the pilot in two phases with a midterm external evaluation allowed many key lesson from phase one – NFP 1 to be brought to bear in the second phase – NFP 2. While there are still some areas of programme design and delivery that do need strengthening, a very firm foundation is already in place.

It is believed that with the necessary refinements, the New Future Programme will make an invaluable contribution to the national project of skilling youth for successful employability. It is therefore hoped that the NFP will be taken to scale in ways that have been recommended above.

## **Appendix 1: Evaluation Instruments**

### **List of instruments prepared by Saide:**

1a Facilitator's Interview Questionnaire

1b Participant's Focus Group Questionnaire

1c Programme Coordinator's interview Questionnaire

1d Questionnaire for Telephonic interviews with eMentors

1e Lesson Observation Schedule

## Appendix 1a

### New Futures Programme Facilitator's Interview Questionnaire

#### Purpose of the Interview

We need to collect feedback about the following aspects of the programme:

- Briefing of facilitators on the nature of programme and target group
- Fitness of purpose of overall programme with particular emphasis on specific module delivered
- Efficacy of programme teaching and learning approach and model of delivery
- Efficacy of assessment strategy

#### Format of the discussion

- One-on-one interview use of open-ended questions contained in questionnaire.
- The time allocated to for this activity is one and a half hours.

#### Questions

##### 1. Briefing of facilitators on the nature of programme and target group

- 1.1 Was a clear briefing on the nature of programme provided?
- 1.2 Was a clear profile of the target group provided?

##### 2. Fitness of purpose of overall programme

- 2.1 Please provide own understanding of fitness of purpose of the overall programme.
- 2.3 Is there alignment in the understanding of the overall programme purpose between the various role players?

##### 3. Efficacy of programme delivery, in particular, the teaching and learning approach and delivery model

- 3.1 Provide own understanding of the learning and teaching needs of the target group including support needed.
- 3.2 Comment on the efficacy of the learning and teaching strategies used in the delivery of this programme.

3.3 Comment on the efficacy of the delivery model used.

**4. Efficacy of assessment strategy**

4.1 Elaborate on the role and purpose of the assessment tasks set.

4.2 Comment on the efficacy of the assessment strategy and learner performance

4.3 Provide information on use of external examiners and/or moderators.

**5. Impact of the New Future's Programme on the employability of the participants**

5.1 Comment on whether the purpose of the programme is being achieved – what impact, if any, is the programme having on the employability of the participants?

**6 Other key issues**

6.1 Comment on any other key issues – strengths, weaknesses or recommendations regarding the programme.



## Appendix 1b

### New Futures Programme Participant Focus Group Questions

**Duration:** One- and- an -half -hours

We need to collect participant feedback about the following aspects of the programme:

- Alignment of programme purpose with broad job description of IT technician (both hard & soft skills)
- Overall programme design and delivery including:
  - Content – hard and soft skills, input from guest speakers
  - Learnings from e Mentors and workplace experience (job shadowing opportunities)
  - pedagogical approach – learning projects, own research, presentations
  - Quality of facilitation and interpersonal relationships with facilitators
  - General and individual learning support
- Programme materials – curriculum support, articles, additional readings etc
- Impact on practice – skills, confidence, professionalism - employability
- General reflections – strengths and weaknesses of the programme
- Degree to which expectations were met.

## Appendix 1c

### **New Futures Programme Programme Coordinator's Questionnaire**

#### **Purpose of the Interview**

We need to collect information about the following aspects of the programme:

- Conceptualisation and setting up of programme: Briefing of the Programme Coordinator on the nature & specific requirements of programme, target group – documents provided and contractual obligations.
- Functioning of various role players
- Efficacy of model of programme planning, delivery and assessment
- Perception of programme impact

#### **Format of the discussion**

- One-on-one interview use of open-ended questions contained in questionnaire.
- The time allocated to for this activity is one -and -a -half hours.

#### **Questions**

##### **1. Briefing of the Programme Coordinator on the nature & specific requirements of programme, target group – documents provided and contractual obligations.**

- 1.1. Was a clear briefing on the nature of programme provided? What supporting documentation was provided or developed?
- 1.2. Were you provided with a clear job description?
- 1.3. Were the roles of the various role players (SchoolNet Director, NFP administrator, facilitators, mentors, Microsoft, AED) clearly defined?
- 1.4. Was a clear profile of the learner target group provided?

##### **2. Conceptualisation and setting up of programme: Alignment in the understanding of the overall programme purpose between the various role players.**

- 2.1. In your opinion, is there alignment in the understanding of the overall programme purpose between the various role players? (Microsoft, SchoolNet, AED)
- 2.2. Were roles and functions determined for all three stakeholders? Were these contractually documented?

2.3. In your opinion, is there anything that should have been done differently?

### **3. Efficacy of the various role players in the programme**

3.1. Provide comment on the various role players and how they performed their functions:

- Microsoft
- AED
- SchoolNet
- The facilitation team
- The mentors
- The programme participants
- If the participants had a Class Representative Team/committee, comment on its efficacy
- The programme administrator
- Any other?

3.2. How were requests & recommendations from any of the role players conveyed to the programme coordinator?

3.3. Were requests acted on by the coordinator? Provide examples of where requests were and/or were not met.

### **4. Efficacy of programme planning and delivery**

4.1 Comment on the efficacy of programme planning

4.2 Comment on the efficacy of the delivery model used.

4.3 Comment on the efficacy of the programme resources and teaching and learning materials used.

4.4 Comment on the efficacy of programme assessment strategy

### **5. Impact of the New Futures Programme on the employability of the participants**

5.1 Comment, if at all possible, on whether the purpose of the programme is being achieved – what impact, if any, is the programme having on the ability of the programme graduates to secure work as IT technicians?

### **6. Other key issues**

6.1 Comment on any other key issues – strengths, weaknesses or recommendations regarding the programme.

## Appendix 1d

### New Futures Programme

#### Questionnaire for Telephonic Interviews with eMentors

##### 1. Personal details

Name:

Surname:

Name of company/ organization / other:

Position:

Tel:

Email:

##### 2. Name of mentee:

- Were you provided with his/her profile at the outset?
- Do you feel that you were provided with sufficient information about your Mentee to start with or not? Comment
- Were you provided with a copy of the Mentee's Contract detailing his/her responsibilities?

3. Do you feel you were provided with sufficient information about the New Futures Programme and its aims to orientate?

4. How were you recruited?

5. Do you know what criteria were used to "match" you to your mentee?

6. Were you provided with the eMentoring Hand book/Guide

- Did you find it useful? Yes/No Explain

7. Were you helped by the staff of the NFP to set up the Instant Messaging account?

8. Orientation to eMentoring: Was an initial instant Messaging chat session – Q & A on eMentoring conducted with you/others?

- Were guidelines for eMentoring discussed?
- Were you given a set of clear expectation and/ or any sort of contract/agreement to sign?

9. Were specific times for chatting agreed to or not?

- If not, do you think the times should have been fixed or not?

10. Were you provided with a framework of questions/activities to guide your sessions?

- Was the way in which the eMentoring was set up effective or would you have liked a more structured process?

11. Did you find the “tips” readings, links etc. from the eMentoring coordinator useful or not?

- Any other comments?

12. Did the IM system work well for you as a means of communication? Would you have preferred another way of communicating eg email, telephone etc?

- Did your mentee manage the typing on the IM sufficiently well to facilitate meaningful communication or was this an impediment to the flow of conversation?
- Was the suggested half hour per week sufficient for the eMentoring process? If not, what would you suggest?

13. Have you participated in any other mentoring type process before this one?

- If yes, eMentoring or face-to-face?
- Briefly describe
- Did this past experience significantly influence this mentoring process?

14. Do you have any general comments about the process?

- What for you were the strengths?
- What were the weaknesses?
- Any key lessons learnt?

15. Any other comments.

**Thank you for your time and valuable input**

## Appendix 1e

### New Futures Programme Classroom observation schedule

#### 1. Session details

Name of facilitator:

Date:

Session topic:

Number of participants present:

Classroom organization:

#### 2. Session planning & preparation

- Was the classroom and necessary equipment/resources prepared before the session began?
- Was the facilitator punctual?
- Did the facilitator model professional behaviour at all times?

#### 3. Lesson delivery process

- Did the facilitator introduce the lesson well – outcomes clearly stated?
- Was new content well introduced?
- Was teaching well sequenced and scaffolded?
- Was content relevant, update, accurate?
- Was the delivery method interactive / activity-based
- Was the language level appropriate for the target group?
- Was the content level appropriate for the target group?
- How was learning consolidated?
- How was learning assessed?
- Were any learning and teaching materials provided/ If yes, describe
- Did the facilitator employ any differentiated teaching strategies to support a range of skill and ability levels?

#### 4. Participants

- Were the participants on time?
- Did participants take notes?
- Were participants actively engaged?