

# Learning at the Workplace: Grappling with Quality

Qualifications Africa 2004

15 September, 14:20

Carmel Marock and Candice Harrison-Train



**SINGIZI CONSULTING**  
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT : CONCEPTS THAT WORK

# Integrating the worlds of education and work



Ensuring that learning is relevant to the needs of the economy and society

Creating opportunities for career development, employment or self-employment

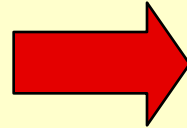
Ensuring learner competence

Ensuring that workplaces become learning organisations

Bridging the gaps between theory and practice

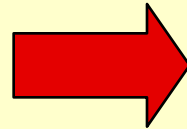
# Defining “workplaces”

Education & training providers  
(which are also workplaces)  
whose primary business is  
education and training



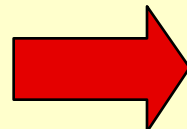
Quality of education and  
training assured by ETQA

Workplaces that are accredited  
education and training providers  
but whose primary business is  
not education and training



Quality of education and  
training assured by ETQA

Workplaces NOT accredited as  
providers but where learners on  
learnerships are placed for the  
work-based component



Some ETQAs require  
“workplace accreditation”  
Some ETQAs encourage  
good practice  
Some ETQAs have no  
guidelines or requirements

— Our Focus

# A Case Study – FIETA NSF SHINTSHA Learnership Project

## Institutional Component

Furniture-related education and training providers

- 700+ unemployed learners on learnerships in furniture making learnerships
- Learnerships being run by FIETA-accredited (or provisionally accredited) providers
- Providers recruit workplaces for work-based component
- Formal assessments in the workplaces usually conducted by the providers using registered assessors
- Contact between providers and workplaces is usually ad hoc and varies from provider to provider

## Project

## Work-based Component

Furniture-related workplaces

- FIETA ETQA has no guidelines or requirements for workplaces hosting learners on learnerships (i.e. no workplace accreditation)
- Some workplaces have been registered as levy-payers with the FIETA
- Most workplaces are SMMEs
- Workplaces host from 1 to 10 learners
- Primary business of all workplaces recruited is furniture-making or related industry

# Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of Shintsha Project

- M&E research takes place every two months and includes
  - Telephonic interviews with providers
  - Telephonic interviews with workplaces hosting learners
  - Self-completion questionnaires from learners relating to both institutional component and workplace component
  - Learner focus group discussions
- Results are fed back to Shintsha project managers every two months to ensure that problems are addressed efficiently and effectively

# M&E Findings from Research Studies with Workplaces

## **Workplace Findings Regarding Management of Learnerships**

- Many workplaces unclear on the SETA-related benefits/incentives of participating in learnerships
- Many workplaces unclear on roles and responsibilities as a workplace hosting a learnership
- Workplaces express concern about “high levels of bureaucracy” involved in hosting learners and engaging with SETAs through learnerships
- Workplaces do not always understand current practices with regards to education and training and assessment
- Supervising/coaching of learners is varied and in some instances taking place to a limited extent
- Workplace communication with providers largely limited to discussions about immediate problems, such as learner discipline
- Some workplaces view learnerships as way to access additional labour, while others view learnerships as a burden and drain on human resources as learners “require full-time attention”

# M&E Findings from Research Studies with Workplaces

## Workplace Findings Regarding Learners

- Workplace perceptions of learner readiness to enter the workplace after the institutional component are varied. Some view learners as “well-prepared” and others view learners as “not prepared at all”. This appears to be largely linked to workplace expectations rather than provider performance
- Most workplaces feel that there are issues with learner discipline, i.e. absenteeism, arriving late, taking long breaks, other more serious problems. Some feel that learners need more training/initiation in terms of work ethics

***They sometimes do not come on time and are a bit slack. This is a great opportunity and they are getting paid for it too – Shintsha Project Workplace***

***They disrupt the workplace by coming late, being drunk on duty and generally not communicating. These things have affected full-time workers badly - Shintsha Project Workplace***

- Despite such problems, VERY high percentages of workplaces report that they would hire learners on completion if in a position to do so and 100% to date have reported that they would host learners again!

# M&E Findings from Research Studies with Learners

- Some learners are very pleased with their placements and feel that they are getting excellent educational value from the experience
- Others have experienced a variety of problems, from not being allowed to develop their skills to perceived abuse in the workplace.

***They make you sand all day. That's all we do. It's not right –***  
Shintsha Project Learner

***We are only sanding and sweeping and making tea. That's all we do*** - Shintsha Project Learner

***I just wash dishes and make tea. I prefer to be at the college. I want another employer*** - Shintsha Project Learner

***They speak to us badly. It's a waste of time to go there. They treat us like nothing*** - Shintsha Project Learner

***We are just labour*** - Shintsha Project Learner

***Some of the workers feel that we are there to take their jobs and this is a problem*** - Shintsha Project Learner

# The Quality Debate

*Without workplaces there are no learnerships*

*Without quality, learners may obtain no benefit from the experience*

## Accrediting or regulating workplaces for learnerships

- Ensures higher standards of quality
- Sets minimum standards
- Assists workplaces to understand their role

### **BUT**

- Results in workplaces choosing not to participate



Trend towards de-regulating workplaces across SETA ETQAs

## Not accrediting or regulating workplaces for learnerships

- More workplaces keen to participate
- Allows flexibility

### **BUT**

- Can severely limit the benefit to learners
- Can open learners to abuse

# How do we find a balance?

- Ensure that workplaces understand their roles and responsibilities in terms of learnerships – Employer Guidelines and additional initiation strategies
- Ensure that workplaces understand how they will benefit/not benefit in terms of the learnership
- Encourage the training of coaches and mentors through the provision of incentives
- Ensure that learners understand their rights and know what to expect from the placement – many learners sign learnership agreements but do not fully understand the contents thereof
- Find ways to ensure that providers more closely monitor and support the work-based component
- Develop clearer guidelines relating to workplace assessment