

The WIL to work

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In 2014, South Africa had the third-highest unemployment rate in the world for people between the ages of 15 to 24, behind Spain and Greece. – World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Risk 2014 report.

The above report estimated that more than 50 percent of young South Africans between 15 and 24 were unemployed.¹ In the following year, according to the OECD, South Africa's youth unemployment rate was the highest in the world.²

"With less experience and fewer skills than many adults, young people often encounter particular difficulty accessing work. The global youth unemployment rate, which has long exceeded that of other age groups, saw its largest annual increase on record in 2009; at its peak, 75.8 million young people were unemployed." - ILO, quoted in United Nations, World Youth Report, 2011, p10.

Youth in general have difficulty entering the labour market because of lack of work-relevant skills, lack of information and connections for acquiring appropriate skills, lack of experience and credentials that could get them started on an upward path, and limited opportunities for entry-level work that is career-oriented.

Lack of work opportunities often motivates youth to improve their qualifications through study. In many cases, college students have never had a formal job. Thus many graduates face the dilemma of not having workplace experience upon exiting college into industry.

It is against this background that False Bay TVET College has aligned itself with various industry partners, SETAs and other role-players to provide our graduates with the necessary work-integrated learning and enhance their prospects of future employment.

What is work-integrated learning?

The term "work-integrated learning" (WIL) refers to learning that takes place through the medium of work. The approach combines teaching and learning inside and outside the workplace in a structured programme. For the learner WIL integrates theoretical knowledge learnt in the classroom environment and its practical application in the workplace. The purpose of applying WIL at TVET colleges is to develop the students' competence (i.e. their ability to apply knowledge and skills to the tasks and demands of the workplace) and to improve their employability.

WIL is essential for aligning the TVET system to industry and to improving students' employment prospects. Expanding WIL is therefore in the interests of the state, the economy, TVET institutions and students. To expand WIL, a mindset change is required of industry and therefore, the business case must be made for it.

Why WIL is important to government

One of the critical areas of focus for the Department of Higher Education and Training for the next five years will be to "...expand the availability of opportunities for workplace training for students in colleges and universities and to expand forms of workplace training such as learnerships and apprenticeships" (DHET Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2015/16 – 2019/20).

WIL is specifically contextualised and its centrality confirmed in the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training 2013*, the *National Development Plan*, *National Skills Development Strategy 3* and the *National Skills Accord*: "The aim of the government is to improve the amount and quality of workplace training in South Africa... Workplace training and work

integrated learning (WIL) must be a central part of our training system... Work integrated learning (WIL) should be a central component of the college programmes.” (Policy statement in the *2014 White Paper for Higher Education and Training*).

These policies mandate delivery and strategic priorities in the TVET college sector and advocate cohesion between TVET colleges and industry to provide work integrated learning opportunities.

Why WIL matters to business

There are potentially significant rewards for businesses that take a strategic approach toward recruiting and developing young talent including “younger workers [that] represent an asset to firms in their capacities as consumers, influencers, innovators, and tech-savvy employees.” (ManpowerGroup, 2012, p12).

Specific rewards for businesses working with the WIL programmes of colleges may include:

- productive and cost-effective hire for the duration of WIL;
- avenue for an enhanced screening process for potential employees;
- reduced recruitment and induction costs (tax breaks and BBBEE scorecard points);
- development of a culture of learning within the organisation;
- opportunity to influence college curricula and be influenced by it (especially in terms of new ideas, systems, processes and technology).

WIL at False Bay TVET College

The work-integrated learning unit at False Bay TVET College comprises the Job Placement Department located at Westlake Campus. The unit has three functions:

- **Placement support**
- **Lecturer workplace exposure (LWE)**
- **Workplace-based experience (WBE)**

Placement support

The core function of the Job Placement Department is to place successful learners in industry upon exit, i.e. on completion of National Certificate (Vocational) Level 4, National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (Nated), National Certificate, learnerships, engineering apprenticeships and some occupational programmes. Support is provided by the Job Placement Department through:

- an orientation programme preparing students for the world of work;
- providing work-readiness workshops;
- assisting with interview and CV writing skills;
- identifying host employers and building relationships with them;
- monitoring and evaluation of learners during placements through visits, phone calls or emails;
- tracking of learners and receiving feedback from learners and host employers.

Lecturer workplace exposure

Lecturer workplace exposure (LWE) is workplace exposure through visits/placement in and/or training in the workplace. Lecturers at False Bay TVET College are required to obtain a minimum of five days non-consecutive workplace-based experience. This experience develops lecturers' capacity and fosters good relations between the College and industry.

Workplace-based experience

The workplace-based experience (WBE) programme is undertaken by the various academic departments with the Job Placement Department acting in a supporting role. DHET has placed great emphasis on the practical component that needs to be covered within the NC(V) programme specifically and WBE meets this need.

NC(V) Level 3/4 and N4/5 learners are placed in industry for a period of five days, usually during their holiday period. Learners are briefed by their respective Programme Heads before going out into the industry and sourcing their own placement opportunities. Learners are issued a WBE Task Book to record various activities to be completed in the workplace. This task book forms part of the learners' continuous assessments and will be marked by the lecturer upon returning to the College.

False Bay TVET College appoints WIL Manager

Faikah Boltman was appointed as the Work-Integrated Manager for False Bay College at the beginning of December 2016. She has over 16 years' experience in the education sector. After completing her Bachelor of Commerce (Education), she began her career teaching Grade 12 Economics and Business Economics at Cambridge High School, Cape Town. Thereafter, she entered the world of distance learning at the International Colleges Group. However, a yearning to interact with students face-to-face led to a move to the College of Cape Town. Here she stayed for a period of ten years and lectured post-school students in Tourism. After four years at the College of Cape Town she was promoted to Education Specialist, managing the Tourism department at the City and Wynberg Campuses.

In 2012 her love for travel and adventure led her to accept a teaching position at Diyar International Private School, in the United Arab Emirates, which follows the American Common Core State Standards Curriculum. During her four years at the school she was fully involved in all aspects of teaching and learning as well as extra-curricular activities, such as convening the Entrepreneurship Festival (two years in a row), spelling bee, maths Olympiad and book fairs.

Having returned to South Africa in June 2016, Faikah took up a substitute lecturing position at the College of Cape Town for three months before moving to False Bay TVET College. She says, "I see WIL as a key driver to build and capacitate our students to take up the challenges in the 'real' world of work, increasing productivity and value for both the employer and the student."

¹By contrast, the global average unemployment rate for youth aged 15 to 24 years tends to fluctuate between 11 and 14 percent.

²The standard definition of unemployment was used, that is, youth who had no work, were interested in working and had actively sought work opportunities. The expanded definition, on the other hand, includes everyone who desires employment but doesn't have it, whether or not they have actively tried to find a job. The unemployment rate in the expanded definition tends to be higher than the standard definition.

More about False Bay TVET College

False Bay TVET College is passionate about ensuring placement of students upon completion of their programme. Achieving a 87.6% total placement rate for 2016, the college has to date a 129 host agreements with companies ranging from schools, educare centres, NGOs, financial and insurance companies, engineering firms, electrical workshops, car dealerships, retail stores, welding companies, hotels, tourism businesses, various government departments, etc.

False Bay TVET College offers Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) at five campuses across the Cape Town metropole. It is one of six TVET colleges serving the Western Cape [the others are Boland College, College of Cape Town, Northlink College, South Cape College and West Coast College] that not only contribute to economic growth through the development of the workforce, but combat youth unemployment by equipping young learners with marketable skills that ensure work readiness.

One of the top-performing TVET colleges in the country, False Bay offers entry into career paths in Engineering, Business, Hospitality, Information Technology, Safety in Society, Education Studies, 2D Animation, Tourism and Boat Building.

For more information, visit www.falsebaycollege.co.za.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colleen Brennon is Marketing Manager at False Bay TVET College.

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