



## Theme: Labour Market

Johann Maree<sup>1</sup>

### Job creation through skills development

The high levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality in South Africa are well-known. Most people would agree that poverty and unemployment would be considerably reduced if a high rate of inclusive economic growth could be sustained for at least a decade or two. But at present the economy is limping along with a growth rate of less than one percent per annum with the result that the number of unemployed people is increasing rather than decreasing. So what can be done?

The starting point of the Mandela Initiative's focus on job creation through skills development is that a considerable number of jobs can be created by means of skills development. There are a vast number of job vacancies due to a shortage of skills resulting from insufficient and inadequate professional, technical and vocational education and training.

### What has the Mandela Initiative to create jobs by means of skills development done so far?

Its major collective activity has been two workshops. The first workshop was held at Goedgedacht far from 29 Sept to 2 Oct 2016. It was attended by 19 people, 15 of which were actively involved in skills training of some kind or another that resulted in work placement afterwards in most cases. The participants came from diverse sectors of society.<sup>2</sup> What the

### About this brief

This brief was commissioned by the Mandela Initiative to help inform a synthesis report on its work since the 2012 national conference, *Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality*, organised by the University of Cape Town. The MI provides a multi-sectoral platform to investigate and develop strategies to overcome poverty and reduce inequality in South Africa. While the Nelson Mandela Foundation is a key partner, the Initiative has relied on collaborations between academics and researchers, government, business leaders, civil society, the church and unions.

The synthesis report serves as a framework for reporting on the work of the MI at a national gathering on 12 – 14 February 2018 at the University of Cape Town. The MI *Think Tank* has identified the objectives for the gathering as:

- to anchor the contributions of the MI within an analysis of the current South African political and economic context;
- to share the recommendations emanating from the MI-related work streams at a policy/strategic level to advance the goal of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality;
- to critically engage with the potential impact of the recommendations on eliminating structural poverty and inequality; and
- to discuss ways of promoting popular conversations and debate about what needs to be done to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, beyond the MI.

The synthesis report aims to assist participants to prepare for the national gathering. The report drew on findings from the sectoral research projects of Think Tank members; the MI's *Action Dialogues*; a report on an MI *Community of Practice workshop* with research chairs from different universities to identify cross-cutting themes emerging from the MI's *research programme*; and the work programmes of others who have expressed an interest in contributing to the goals of the MI.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.mandelainitiative.org.za/images/docs/Summary%20of%20Job-Creating%20Skills%20Development%20Workshop%20-%20Johann%20Maree.pdf> for a summary of the

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workshop revealed was the enormous extent to which skills development was already taking place and that there are no obvious or easy gaps to fill. It was mooted that greater networking and linkages between the diverse organisations would result in improved and increased job creation.

As a result I set about exploring and networking. I set out to find other organisations and initiatives that have the aim of providing skills and job creation. I discovered that a plethora of organisations and initiatives exist. The most dramatic discovery was that there are no less than 214 support organisations for entrepreneurial initiatives active in South Africa. Amongst them there are 89 capacity development providers and 71 direct finance providers. In addition, there exists a global network of organisations that promote entrepreneurship in emerging markets, the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE).<sup>3</sup>

My explorations enabled me to network with a wide range of organisations I was completely unaware of before.

The exploration and networking have pointed to the need to compile a compendium of all the organisations and initiatives existing and operating in South Africa. The compendium could serve as a companion to skills developers and job creators in the form of an e-book on the internet with interactive capabilities, so that people could add, modify and update the information contained in it. To be effective it would need to operate like Wikipedia with an editor that keeps it up to date, ensures a uniform style with consistent, high-quality information that is user-friendly.

My networking gave rise to the second workshop, held at the Gugulethu campus of the Cape Town TVET College on 18 October 2017. The workshop was organised by the Let's Get to Work Collective consisting of the VPUU (Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading), the Mandela Initiative on Job Creation through Skills Development, and Emeritus Associate Professor Tom Ryan on behalf of the Salesian Institute Youth Project. The Salesian Institute is "dedicated to improving the lives of South Africa's vulnerable children and youth at risk" and has provided "education, shelter and emotional support for at risk young children" for more than a century.<sup>4</sup>

The workshop grew out of the VPUU Let's Get to Work Programme organised by Don Shay from the VPUU. He had previously organised seven Let's Get to Work Workshops with a wide range of stakeholders at the Gugulethu Campus from late 2015 to early 2017. Since more can be achieved through co-operating with other energetic and enthusiastic people who share broadly the same goal, we decided to hold the workshop as a collective. Stakeholders and organisations from a broad range of constituencies were invited. The criteria for being invited was that the invitee had experience and expertise in skills development aimed at employability and would be able to make a meaningful

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Workshop, and <http://www.mandelainitiative.org.za/images/docs/Workshop%20on%20Job-Creating%20Skills%20Development%2029%20Sept%20-%202%20Oct%202016.pdf> for a full report of the Workshop, the participants and the organisations they represented.

<sup>3</sup> Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs, <http://www.andeglobal.org/>. Accessed 6 Nov 2017.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.salesianyouth.org.za/who-we-are/about/> Accessed 6 Nov 2017.

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contribution at the workshop. Forty-five people attended from the following constituencies: business, public benefit organisations/non-profit organisations, government, academia, entrepreneurial support organisations, youth, and international skills development agencies.

The workshop focussed on the following three strategies:

1. The feasibility of developing a “portal” or a “one-stop shop” that could assess the employability of unemployed youth and NEETs (people **not** in **employment, education or training**) and connecting them to whatever education and training they may require to make them employable and work-ready;
2. Raising the formal education and training system at TVET colleges to make them deliver a world-class service and thereby increase the employability of unemployed youth;
3. Redesigning the non-accredited and informal education and training schemes to increase the employability of the unemployed youth at risk who constitute a large proportion of the NEETs.

The findings of the Workshop have not been finalised yet, but, at this stage, it seems as if the following three strategies are worth pursuing by the Mandela Initiative:

1. Developing a “portal” or a “one-stop shop” that could assess the employability of unemployed youth and NEETs and assist them to become employable so that they can find or create income-earning work.
2. Upgrading the TVET colleges to help them deliver a world-class service.
3. Expanding ways of assisting youth at risk with informal training that enhances their employability and enables them to earn a living one way or another.

Johann Maree

Co-ordinator

Mandela Initiative on Job Creation through Skills Development

Email: [johann.maree@uct.ac.za](mailto:johann.maree@uct.ac.za)

**For more information on the Mandela Initiative:**

