

## **Baseline study on students' perceptions and attitudes towards the HWSETA Artisan Programme (Mpho Phago – researcher; and Sikhumbuzo Gcabashe - Reviewer)**

The Health and Welfare Sector and Education and Training Authority (HWSETA) in partnership with the Swiss-South African Co-operative Initiative (SSACI) implemented the HWSETA Artisan Support Programme. This initiative was created by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) which aims to increase the number of Artisans qualifying each year. The HWSETA's main role was to provide funding while SSACI was responsible for the overall project management. The Artisan Programme had been running for two years when a need was identified to conduct a baseline study.

The main objective of the study was to determine learners' perceptions and experiences towards the HWSETA Artisan Support Programme and programme partners (For example, HWSETA and SSACI). A further objective was to provide recommendations in order to improve the programme.

The study comprised of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The sample of the study was learners, host employers, project co-ordinators from the HWSETA, SSACI and colleges.

The Artisan Programme was overall well implemented. The Artisan Programme experienced a high completion rate and improved the employability of individuals. However, the study found that 59.6% of those interviewed were currently unemployed. The issue of unemployment can be related to a number of factors. The trade test results provided by centres do not have official stamps which some employers would not accept as valid. Of those unemployed, many fell into similar trades. This raised the question of whether the Artisan Programme was recruiting for trades that are currently in demand. Host employers had their own Artisan Programmes, which meant they were more likely to employ those who were part of their own Artisan Programmes.

The learners stated that it is a good programme helping those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds to learn and gain the necessary experience. However, the HWSETA needs to be more involved in the Artisan Programme and increase the involvement of employers within the health and social sectors to provide workplace learning and eventually to employ the learners.

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The full study is available at: [http://www.hwseta.org.za/?page\\_id=474](http://www.hwseta.org.za/?page_id=474)

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