

## **South Africa holds its own in the facilitation industry**

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The National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa is to increase participation to 20%, hinting to the fact that at least 80% of the youth between the ages of 18 and 24 years old do not have access to tertiary education at present. One of the main objectives of the South African government is to expand student numbers and improve access to higher education as a tool to overcoming inequalities and creating a stable society. Education is also considered a requirement to drive economic growth. Student numbers have in fact increased dramatically over the last 10 years resulting in the 23 existing universities and universities of technology not being able to cope with the demand for tertiary education. The corporate world therefore had to respond to the demand through internal skills development departments and facilities, creating huge demand for high quality facilitators and assessors.

The demand of the emerging middle class in third world economies in Africa is so huge that the supply of educationalists and facilitators cannot keep up. The result is that thousands of opportunists have entered the marketplace and become freelance trainers, creating an overtraded but under-resourced market. The complexities of providing training to heterogeneous groups demand high quality facilitators, but the problem of over demand and under supply will always result in a drop in the quality of facilitation. The solution is to develop facilitators to cope with complex and diverse environments on a continuous basis, including rapid technological changes.

In first world environments there are established models, techniques and processes for both learning programme development and facilitation of learning. While they are coping with technological changes they are relatively predictable in training and development with big players in the field. In developing countries, learning and development specialists have to contend with social, political, environmental and technological challenges, whilst productivity and efficiency are measured differently in developing countries.

Well trained South African facilitators are used to coping with the complexities of the third world; therefore training in a first world country is considered a much less complex undertaking. There are many case studies of South African educationalists that are internationally acclaimed and published. There are many South African experts employed the world over, and certainly many of the Institute of People Development's (IPD) alumni are facilitating and developing courses globally.

South Africans are resilient and understand diversity. They will survive and thrive in almost any environment due to the volatility of what they grew up with. They are not locked into paradigms and understand that there is a set of interrelated systems to deal with. South Africans are therefore positioned to be the preferred facilitators internationally, but it is necessary for the South African market to understand that quality should be the focus and not budgets. Good facilitators are attracted by passion, not money, as illustrated by the fact that assessors and trainers are now paid less than they

were eight years ago, due to the overtrading of the market. Yet the astute and dedicated learning and development (L&D) professionals are sticking to the industry and continuing to train and empower the people of South Africa.

Whether this situation is sustainable is yet to be investigated. Today South Africa has world class facilitators and assessors, but is the next generation being developed and is enough being done to keep L&D professionals up to date with global trends? The ability to regenerate best practice every day and continuously develop top quality learning and development practitioners of all ages should receive more attention. In order to address the general skills shortage in South Africa, many quality L&D professionals are still required.

With a renewed focus on research and development and innovative training methodologies, South Africa could retain its place on the global learning and development stage. However, incentives should be put in place to reduce the brain drain; retain good South African facilitators and train new facilitators faster than what the older facilitators are leaving the country.

South Africa has the appropriate human resources to provide exceptional facilitation to the country and the world. The hope remains that when those facilitators that left our country have learnt from their first world experiences, that South Africa will be able to entice them back. It is such facilitators that will lead the next generation of world-class learning and development in the South African market.

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***Boilerplate:***

*Founded in 1999, Workplace Skills Solutions t/a The Institute of People Development (IPD) strives to equip, prepare and certify practitioners in order to serve South Africa's skills development strategy as well as facilitating the transformation of education and training. Over the years, IPD has become the preferred people development partner to most state owned and private enterprises in Southern Africa. For more information, please contact IPD at [mark.orpen@peopledev.co.za](mailto:mark.orpen@peopledev.co.za) on (011) 315 2913 or visit [www.peopledevelopment.co.za](http://www.peopledevelopment.co.za).*