

## INDUSTRY REPORT



# Riding waves of change

## Education and training in the SA pulp and paper sector

It was the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who is reported to have said that ‘the change is the only constant in life’. Navigating change in any sphere and doing so successfully is not an easy feat; even more so when it comes to ensuring that the pulp and paper sector has access to a diverse pool of qualified people to keep papermaking on a roll.

TAPPSA Journal spoke to PAMSA’s education and training manager Olga Bezuidenhout about the lay of the land. “The education and training landscape for the pulp and paper sector is undergoing significant changes, mainly due to structural changes at government level as well as the introduction of a new quality council which is responsible for all occupational and trade qualifications, the QCTO.”

“These changes make it particularly challenging for mills and companies to plan appropriately in line with their own training and development needs,” says Bezuidenhout.

One can understand that even though the wheels of change turn slowly, industry cannot afford to stand still or leave training unattended.

### Matching skills to industry needs

Another challenge is that the quality of graduating learners don’t always meet industry standards which means that mills need to ‘top up’ the training and bridge the knowledge

gaps. “PAMSA is working with industry and various education partners on collaborative projects that will address the industry-wide gaps, thus saving industry both money, time and resources.”

“For a number of years, PAMSA has been involved on both ends,” she notes. The ‘feeder end’ where PAMSA partners with TVET colleges and universities, and at the absorption end by understanding the principal needs of industry while ensuring that paper manufacturers are party to qualification development.

In 2015, PAMSA was appointed as the development quality partner (DQP) to work on four sector qualifications under the QCTO and for the past few years has been working to update its education ladder.

Given the various education and training opportunities within the sector, the education ladder outlines three paths for those who work full-time, school leavers and those students from TVET colleges with Grade 10-12 or a technical matric.

“It is important for industry to keep in mind that the current pulp and paper qualification ladder is changing. This will influence their education and training development processes,” adds Bezuidenhout, adding that PAMSA is committed to keeping industry aligned on the changes and providing them with the opportunity to get involved.

## Making way for new QCTO qualifications

The three unit standard based certificates (National Certificate: Pulp & Paper Operations - NQF level 2 and 3; the Further Education and Training Certificate: Pulp and Paper Operations NQF level 4) and the Pulp and Paper Occupational Programme (PPOP) will be phased out from 2018 and replaced by two QCTO qualifications for full-time employees, namely Pulp Process Controller and Paper Process Controller. Each will have an NQF level 4 exit with built-in part-qualifications with exit level of NQF level 2 and 3. "These two qualifications have been submitted for review by the QCTO board and we are eagerly awaiting feedback," explains Bezuidenhout.

The third qualification, that of Paper and Packaging Collector, is also under review by the QCTO board. This will formalise the Paper Recycling Association of South Africa's entrepreneurship training course, currently being run as a four-day workshop.

The course has been re-designed to intensify the various practical and financial modules to NQF Level 2, resulting in the informal collectors having a recognized qualification on completion of the course.

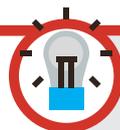
On matters relating to the unit standard based tissue conversion qualifications (National Certificate: Tissue Conversion NQF level 2 and 3, and the Further Education and Training Certificate: Tissue Conversion NQF level 4) are being aligned to a QCTO qualification. "We are calling on the tissue industry to provide input and expertise into this process so as to ensure that the end product is of benefit to the mills," appeals Bezuidenhout.

On the matter of Work Integrated Learning (WIL), the format was due to be dropped by the Durban University of Technology; however the motion was rejected by the Council on Higher Education. "This is good news for industry," she explains.

There are also various changes to the engineering and related qualifications at the Universities of Technology and curriculum changes to pulp and paper related qualifications offered via Unisa.

## Where to next?

Bezuidenhout shares that a number of collaborative projects are on the cards to support industry in terms of the changes and to guide the industry through these phases of change.



### Did you know?

PAMSA and TAPPSA offer a number of short courses that can be tailor-made for specific mill requirements. These are available on request.

- Resource efficiency and cleaner production
- Cleaner production focusing on energy
- Hands-on pulp and papermaking
- Wet end chemistry
- Refining basics
- High yield pulping
- Water and effluent treatment

Contact the TAPPSA office for more information.

She highlights some examples including a review of PPOP learning material and aligning it to the new QCTO qualifications; a recognition of prior learning (RPL) project for PPOP learners; a QCTO Pilot Project (including an industry QCTO assessment centre project); and a mathematics and science tutoring project with TVET partner colleges.

## Power of effective partnership

PAMSA is currently reviewing partnership agreements with the FP&M Seta and the Ekurhuleni East (EEC) and Umfolozi TVET colleges based in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal respectively. "These institutions offer our National Certificate – Vocational (NCV) for Process Operations from NQF levels 2 to 4.

A key element to the success of the NCV will depend on stakeholder involvement as it will have a major impact on the quality of learner. This will be done through various initiatives for example mentorship programmes and tutoring programmes to bridge the gap on essential subjects such as mathematics and science. The current TVET pass rate for mathematics is 30% however industry requires 50%; resulting in a proficiency discrepancy that will not only hamper an individual's career path but also add to a mill's training bill.

Further to this, PAMSA has established pulp and paper partnership committees at both EEC and Umfolozi to work along the FP&M Seta, the respective colleges and industry members in the corresponding regions. "This kind of consultation and collaboration is vital for all stakeholders as we can address issues as they arise, and adjust our course accordingly," notes Bezuidenhout.

With the industry being at a crossroads the world over, the challenge is ever-present to ensure that the cohort of operators can be absorbed, retained and further developed by mills and operations.

Bezuidenhout remarks, "Adaptability is critical at this point. We have to move with changes and ensure that the quality of learners matches the expectations of an industry that itself is evolving."

"By tackling education and training matters on behalf on an already-constrained industry, PAMSA is able to mitigate much of the impact on costs and resources, while seeking to produce better quality of learners and graduates for placement in the pulp and paper sector." ■



## Hub of excellence in the making

In partnership with Umfolozi TVET College Mandeni campus, the FP&M Seta and PAMSA has set up a *Pulp and Paper Centre of Excellence* which aims to serve as a one-stop hub for all pulp and paper related activities, from classrooms to study centres, as well as meeting rooms and facilities for research. The centre, located adjacent to the Mandeni Campus, will be officially opened in August. It will be managed by Noekie Janse van Rensburg as administrative co-ordinator and Tharif Hanif as programme co-ordinator.