

Keynote address by Mandy Rutgers

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Partner exhibitors
Members of the media
Ladies and gentleman
And certainly not least, our learners and educators present here today

It is AgriSETA’s absolute pleasure to be here today.

SETAS were established by the [Skills Development Act of 1998](#) to drive a national skills revolution.

AgriSETA, like with all other SETAs, of which there are 21, were established the **Skills Shortage in South Africa**.

AgriSETA’s purpose is to ensure a steady skills base for the agricultural sector and similarly, upskill and train the workforce in South Africa.

SETAs report to the Department of Higher Education & Training and our Minister is Mr Buti Manamela. In this regard, we form part of national government and serve a national duty.

In explaining the importance of the need for a secure skills supply in the agricultural sector - Today, I am going to present you with a case for studying at an Agricultural or Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) College.

We know that the past informs the future – as an example if your parents have not had a formal education, chances are likely that they will encourage you to pursue a qualification of sorts. Why? Because they know what a formal education can do for you as an adult – and positively impact your life – it makes you marketable in the job arena, and it also gives you stature.

So, today I am going to give you a little history lesson.

You know how many of us value German made appliances? Why is that you may ask – because they produce quality products.

That's great, but how did they get there?

Here comes the history lesson.

Artisanal skills in Germany are often captured by the term Handwerk - which is characterised by skilled crafts and trades. It played a pivotal role in the German nation's economic development.

Handwerk is the tradition of German craftsmanship which dates to the Middle Ages with the rise of guilds, which were organized groups of skilled artisans who set standards for quality and training.

The formalisation of these trades is continued through various traditions and regulations. Unlike some other nations where traditional crafts were largely displaced by industrial production, Germany maintained a clear distinction and complementary relationship between Handwerk and

Industrie. This adaptation was crucial for the survival and continued relevance of artisanal skills in an industrialising economy.

The Role of the Vocational Education System is a cornerstone of Germany's artisanal strength is its highly developed dual vocational training system. This system has become a global model; it integrates practical training with theoretical instruction at vocational schools.

In Germany, this dual system is a highly valued path that prepares a significant portion of the German workforce. In 2014, roughly 1.5 million young Germans chose the vocational track, and over half of the German workforce holds a vocational degree. This system ensures a continuous supply of highly skilled labour, directly contributing to the quality and innovation associated with German products.

Based on this case study, we can see the value of the 21 Sector Education Training Authorities or SETAs which were established post 1994.

This good news is sadly also rooted in a not so pleasant history. It served to rectify the imbalances of the past in South Africa. Specifically, the systematic underdevelopment of training for black workers and the decline in traditional, racially-based apprenticeship training.

In simple terms, the apartheid government valued skills and ensured that white people had a skill while previously disadvantaged people were excluded.

As an example, we often see people sitting just outside hardware stores, holding boards with notices such as 'plumber', 'bricklayer' etc. Many of these people are very skilled, but they do not hold a formal qualification which of course poses a risk when it comes to the built industry because

you need accreditation to ensure quality workmanship that can stand the test of time – and changing weather patterns.

The apartheid government valued technical education primarily as a tool to enforce economic, social, and racial segregation, while simultaneously addressing the industrial need for skilled white labour. Technical education was strategically deployed to limit black South Africans to unskilled or semi-skilled manual labour, aligning with the ideology of preventing black advancement into professional or supervisory roles.

We often hear, Eskom is struggling because there is a lack of qualified Engineers as those people have now retired and are being called back.

Why? Because we – those of us here - don't consider Artisanal Qualifications as a first choice – we see it, that's if we know about it, as a second choice. AgriSETA's CEO recently wrote about this, saying TVET's should NOT be a second choice, but a first choice - if that is where your strength lies. We are not saying that academia should not be considered, of course it does – but let's get real, our universities are overflowing – if you can even get into one.

We also know that many graduates are unemployed – what a sad situation.

And, we are not saying Artisans are not unemployed, but at the very least Artisans can farm out or render their services to society, because they have a skill that allows them to produce their own work opportunities and, in many cases, become business owners – employers.

They way we see it, that is a strong case for studying at an Agricultural and TVET College.

Thank you.

References : <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/germany-national-skills-strategy-2019-review>

South Africa Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

[811 Words – 5.5 minutes]

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