

providing them with practical skills to make them employable in industry and to place them in jobs after completion. The learners selected for the programme, apart from being deaf, were all from very disadvantaged backgrounds and hailed from rural areas and townships. Placement of these learners in a job would mean that they could become independent and responsible members of society. They would also be able to find work in industry or gain enough knowledge and experience to start their own businesses and create jobs for other deaf people.

The learnership programme were project managed by NID and the learnership training were provided by Furntech, an FP&M SETA accredited provider, who also conducted the assessment and moderation. During the programme delivery, Furntech also trained a facilitator employed by NID to enable the organisation to do the training, assessment, moderation and mentoring on their own in the future. As a result, NID applied for programme approval from FP&M SETA to ensure they could do the training independently in future.

During the learnership, the seven learners received theoretical and practical training on a rotation basis, working on an upholstery project at the college for one week and then working in the industry for two weeks. The learners also rotated between different workplaces in the upholstery industry in order to get experience in a variety of disciplines – they received experiential training at upholsterers, companies who specialize in mattress making (different types and uses of materials) and they also work at NID's workshop where furniture is renovated before re-upholstery.



The deaf learners were placed in a hearing work environment for their experiential training, to learn certain soft skills that are necessary to adapt to society and to make it possible for them to be accepted as people in their own right. Some of these soft skills included communicating with hearing people in a work environment, work ethics, coping with conflict in the job and solving problems. Monthly mentor meetings were held between the workplace partners, the facilitator, the programme manager, the assessor and moderator to discuss the learners' progress.

The learners completed level 2 in Upholstery at the end of 2013. They are now doing Level 3. Except for subject training the learners are also trained in Social Competency (SoCoMo), the development of cognitive thinking skills (FIE programme), as well as Life Skills and Computer Skills.

The development of the learner as a person is magnificent to experience! They gain a lot of self-confidence and are able to speak up for themselves after completion of their training. This group of learners did the upholstery of a couch and a wing chair for the Honourable Minister of Higher Education which he requested after he saw what they were doing

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