

## Vocational training support in South Africa

### Project at a glance



Global specialist in energy management, Schneider Electric South Africa has teamed up with the French Ministry of Education and the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) to launch a centre aimed at developing programmes to train technicians and higher technicians in the fields of energy, electricity and maintenance of automated systems. Named the French-South African Schneider Electric Education Centre (F'SASEC), the new facility is in line with the Department of Higher Education and Training's vision of accelerating artisan training across the country and will focus on preparing young South Africans from disadvantaged backgrounds for the job market.

### The context

Vaal University of Technology (VUT) is located in the in the Gauteng region. The region of is located in the high lands - Highveld – of the Transvaal. It is the industrial and commercial heart of the biggest continental power, a fantastic human project, which could constitute around 2015 one of the ten bigger conurbations of the world with Midrand and Pretoria. As each of the eight other provinces, Gauteng has a regional assembly and an executive managed by a Prime Minister and settled in Johannesburg, the "capital" of the province.

The quasi-totality of the big South African or foreign companies have established their head office between Johannesburg and Pretoria. This small province (17 010 km<sup>2</sup>) has the strongest density of population of the country (375 inhabitants in km<sup>2</sup> - 8 million inhabitants, among whom 85 % of Blacks). It contributes at the level of 37 % in the GDP. Half of the population lives in shanty towns. The first three languages are the Zulu, the Afrikaans and the Sesotho.

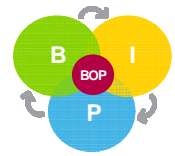


### A noteworthy inauguration



March 21, 2011, the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) has inaugurated this new centre. Numerous personalities were present, illustrating the diversity of the partners involved in the realization of this project. Mr. **Jacque Lapouge**, ambassador of France in South-Africa has attended the ceremony, as well as all the representatives of the different parties involved in the convention. Thus, **Michel le Dévéhat**, from the French department of education and **Irène Moutlana**, VUT's deputy vice-chancellor for academic and research, were also there for the opening day ceremony. For Schneider Electric, It is **Jason Ullbricht**, Human Resource Vice

President - Africa & Caribbean, who was the symbol of the company's involvement. This participation of all the parties demonstrates the country's political ambition to develop vocational trainings, which constitute a step forward towards the economic autonomy and the opening up of the Gauteng



province. Indeed, this training project benefits for all the involved parties: The university, the industry, the community and the country.

As an institute of Higher Learning, VUT is committed to be leaders in innovative knowledge and quality technological education by providing an environment that is conducive to learning as well as innovation that produces top quality employable graduates who will contribute to the economy of our country and also make an impact to society. *“This partnership was established through the Department of Higher Education and Training to facilitate the acceleration of artisan training in preparing young South Africans from disadvantaged backgrounds for the job market with fully developed skills. The centre is fully equipped with Schneider Electrical educational systems, as well as intensive guidance and support in order to ensure that they are skilled and fully competent upon completion of their studies”* said VUT’s **Professor Dion de Beer**: Executive Director Technology Transfer and Innovation (TTI).”

## The Partnership

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To make this project a great success, each one of the parties has brought some significant contributions. VUT has provided the necessary infrastructure required to place the necessary equipment, the professional expertise to assist in developing the curriculum for the centre and the lecturers and staff.

The French Ministry of Education has provided a technical expert to spearhead the curriculum development for the training centre and together with VUT to develop programs which merge the best of the South African and the French education systems.

To finish, Schneider Electric came with all the equipment for the training centre and will make some periodic upgrades of equipment and the necessary technical support to place and maintain the equipment. The centre is fully supported by the **Schneider Electric BipBop\* Training programme** and the **Schneider Electric Foundation** which aims at developing access to a reliable, safe and affordable energy for the most disadvantaged people. In the Schneider Electric’s vision, this objective can be achieved through solutions but also thanks to vocational trainings.

Indeed, since 2009, already 22000 people from the BoP have been trained, contributing to a personal development by getting new electrical skills and competencies. The training centre will provide a range of programmes in the field of energy, electricity automation and renewable energies. *“Schneider Electric South Africa is proud to be associated with an initiative of this caliber. We truly believe that the centre will be instrumental in increasing our local skills pool, empowering graduates to start their own businesses and ultimately creating broader employment opportunities”* said Mr. Carl Kleynhans, Country President - Schneider Electric, Southern Africa.

*\*Business, Innovation and People at the Base of the Pyramid*

## The project today

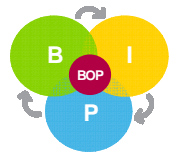
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In March 2012, the centre has made the first intake of students in the training centre. Currently, 24 students are being trained from basic certificate to advanced certificate that will be an equivalent to university graduate and postgraduate level studies. The classes are composed of small groups of 12 students from disadvantaged social background without Matric and who can’t follow University certificate. Students are mainly black and 50% of them are female.

Basically, the training includes two classes with two different training objectives. Those high-level in service and practical trainings are matching with the industry needs as they are based on cutting-edge technology and realistic situations. Thus, in the first year, the centre will deliver a “foundation certificate” where the first goal is to reach the Matric’s level by teaching them both technical and basic subjects such as Math, science or French. After this first introduction year, attendees will have the opportunity to advance through a three years training called “professional certificate”, which is an equivalent of the South-Africa national diploma. They will be trained on very specific electrician technical skills. Their new competencies are dedicated more specifically to homes installation, industrial installations and industrial automation. Students will now have the chance to get employment as they are operational in the electrical engineering field.

# BipBop Programme

## Project presentation / South Africa



The next intake of students for the “professional certificate” will start in July 2013.

This training will make the young graduated students capable of finding an employment on the economic market in the electricity field. For those who have an initiative spirit and which are willing to work towards entrepreneurship and self-employment, an incubator has been created in the third years of the professional certificate to support and train students in their company creation project.

These news resources are going to constitute a valuable breeding ground of talent and a new landmark for the development of local companies and the dynamism of the region.

While the access to university for these young people is impossible due to the increase in registration fees at national universities, (registration fees for the F'SASEC only costs 2000 rounds per year) these practical and technical trainings are the only possible answer to obtain an access to a decent job. The centre will certainly grow thanks to several exchanges projects which should be developed in the upcoming month focusing one student and staff exchanges and joined research programs. It will benefits to all the stakeholders. *“It is generally accepted that there is a desperate shortage of competent technicians and artisans in South African with an estimated shortfall of approximately one hundred fold. It is the vision of national government that the acquisition of these skills will not only provide a vehicle of hope to the unemployment youth of our community but also address the dire skills shortage. In terms of this project and its objectives, we are proud to share that a fully refurbished and functional centre has been developed in under one year with our stakeholders. In addition, this project highlights what may be achieved through partnership and commitment. We would like to thank our stakeholders for sharing this journey with, us and hope that we can grow on these successes and through partnerships make a difference in the lives of those we serve”* concluded Prof Moutlana.

Number of young people trained: 24

For more information: <http://www.vut.ac.za/new/>  
<http://www.schneider-electric.com/bipbop>