Submission by: The National Manpower Advisory Council
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Name of Project: The Zimbabwe Occupational Standards Services

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Employees: Twelve (12)

Background
The Zimbabwe Occupational Standards Services (ZOSS) was established in May 1999 by the National Manpower Advisory Council (NAMACO). NAMACO is a statutory body established in terms of the Manpower Planning and Development Act. Its mandate is to provide policy advice on Human Resources Development to the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education. NAMACO has its representation from all sectors of the Zimbabwean economy. Within its gamut of responsibilities NAMACO identifies gaps in the HRD delivery system and recommends suitable interventions. One such intervention was the establishment of an Occupational Standards (OS) Unit Project that sought to address the mismatch between the quality of graduates coming from training institutions and the demands of the labour market.

Impetus for Change

A combination of initiatives provided the drive to moot, adopt and implement the project. To begin with the 1997 NAMACO Congress passed the following resolutions:

- That a demand-driven human resources development system be established and fully utilised by stakeholders;
- That a comprehensive curriculum review be conducted to determine its effectiveness in meeting the needs of the economy and individuals
- That industry be more active in identifying training needs and standards of competences for incorporation into the curriculum

It was the implementation dictates of the resolutions that translated into the structures, systems and resource mobilisation in the form of the OS Project.

Secondly, a National Vocational and Training Programme Review carried out that year (1997) by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education and the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) recommended the-

- Review of the outdated Skills Proficiencies Schedules used for apprenticeship training and trade testing by recourse to job data that holds currency in industry
- Development of a market-sensitive curricula
ii. **Purpose and Objective of the Change**

The overall purpose of the project was to bring together stakeholders and initiate dialogue to establish consensus on how to link education and training with the real world of work through the development of a curriculum that matches job demands resulting in a skilled national workforce.

iii. **The Innovation Itself**

The innovation involved the:

- Setting up of a unit to administer the project
- Development of concepts, procedures and systems for standards development
- Marketing of the concept to stakeholders
- Training of a pool of facilitators to conduct standards development workshops
- Training of users of profiles
- Production and utilization of profiles

iv. **How It Was Done**

The modus operandi for implementing the change followed consecutive stages each of which entailed the foregrounding of labour market priorities as detailed hereunder

**Consultative Process**

A series of stakeholder consultative meetings were held with all education and training stakeholders to build national consensus on the call for the change.

**Establishment of an implementing unit**

To administer the project, a unit manned by four technical/professional co-ordinators and an equipped office was set up. The exercise was co-funded by (GTZ) and the Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund.

**Systems Development**

Once in place, the Unit set out to developing structures, concepts, systems and procedures for occupational standards production. Comparative analyses of systems and model structures elsewhere were made and best practices were adopted for adaptation to suit the Zimbabwean situation.

Ultimately the unit elected to adopt the DACUM approach to occupational analysis. The method was chosen because it is-

- Quick in that it produces results in two days
- Cheap on account of its logistical efficiency and
- Effective by virtue of the high fidelity of the profile data to the job itself
The DACUM philosophy operates on three premises, namely that:

1. Expert workers are better able to describe their job than anyone else.
2. Any job can be effectively and sufficiently described in terms of the tasks that expert workers in that occupation perform.
3. All tasks have direct implications from the knowledge and attitudes that workers must have in order to perform the tasks correctly.

The actual process is composed of a brainstorming workshop comprising 12-15 expert workers from the relevant industry sector who define their job skills under the guidance of a facilitator. The data is compiled into a DACUM Research Chart which is a graphic portrayal of the Duties; Tasks; Tools and Equipment; Related Knowledge and Skills; Worker Traits; Career Path and Future Trends of the job being profiled.

Marketing

To implement the system, the unit embarked on a nation-wide marketing campaign targeting all education and training stakeholders upon whose acceptance, co-operation and support depended the success of the project.

Training Facilitators

Trained facilitators are a must in profiling workshops. It was therefore incumbent on the unit to train a group of freelance facilitators that would be called upon to run the workshops. The first group of twenty facilitators from both the public and private sector were trained by DACUM consultants form Turkey, Nepal and South Africa. Today ZOSS draws from a pool of over fifty facilitators.

Production of profiles

The process of producing competency profiles followed in earnest in partnership with industry. This involved co-ordinators working with NAMACO Sector Committees to:

- Prioritise the occupations for profiling,
- Identify the relevant organisations for recruitment of expert workers
- Carry out field research to establish the occupational boundaries,
- Recruit expert workers for the profiling workshops.
- Conduct the workshops using freelance facilitators
- Quality control and verify the developed chart using other organisations not involved in the initial stages and
- Dissemination of the occupational profile to users

Training of Users of profiles

As a new innovation to be used by clients, it was necessary to orient the users on how to convert the profiles to tangible utilitarian value. To this end, different experts were trained in use of profiles in
test item writing, curriculum review and development, skills proficiency development and job evaluation.

v. Results Achieved To Date

Over its short period of existence, ZOSS has delivered results in a number of key areas by developing 202 occupational profiles linking the labour market with education and training as shown hereunder.

Training Institutions

Training institutions are now referencing their content to job data that holds currency in industry. The data has also been used to enrich students’ industrial attachments thereby helping to produce work-ready graduates. Because of their user-friendly design, profiles have been adapted for developing modular-based training that is popular in the informal sector and for short-term upgrade training customised for trade testing workers.

Curriculum

The National Curriculum Development Unit has become more efficacious in reviewing and developing curricula by virtue of deriving content from the solid and detailed occupational standards thereby enhancing the relevance of the programmes.

Trade Testing

Skills Proficiencies Schedules and Apprenticeship Training Schedules are now up to date and these are being used for developing test items, testing and monitoring of apprenticeship in industry.

Industry

Employers have adopted profiles for use in recruiting staff and some leading companies carried out job re-engineering programmes based on the occupational profiles and have since been able to upgrade their performance.

Public Service

ZOSS carried out extensive job profiling for the Public Service Commission that resulted in a major overhaul of the Service through reforms based on job evaluation and re-grading. Facilitators were also trained to build capacity for the Commission to do its own profiling.
vi. Outlook For The Future

The onslaught of various external pressures makes it imperative for Zimbabwe to upscale the development of quality skills for local and regional markets. Chief among the forces impacting on the skills development are:

- The brain drain to the to SADC countries, Britain and America amongst others.
- The advent of the K-Economy
- Rapid technological advancement led by the ICT sector
- The dearth of skills in the growing regional economies driven by the 2010 World Soccer Cup in South Africa

This places an enormous responsibility on ZOSS to produce and review occupational standards in sync with job market demands. In short there will be increased demand for occupational standards and provision of germane training and capacity building services.

vii. Potential Implications For Other Organisations

The adoption of occupational standards has ushered in a new epoch of profound changes in human capital development within organisations. The diverse applications of the profiles have drawn organisations back to their drawing boards to re-formulate their policies, plans and practices.

Benefits accruing to organisations opting to use ZOSS profiles:

- Significant employee involvement and buy-in
- Firm basis for assessing the relevance of existing programmes
- Provision of detailed information for worker career counselling, training needs assessment and performance appraisals
- Provision of a legally defensible and socially tenable basis for developing performance tests
- Profiles have the ability to describe job preparations, processes and systems to meet TQM, ISO 9000 series and QM 9000 quality requirements.

ZOSS products and services include the sale of profiles, conducting company specific profiling, training facilitators and provision of education and training related consultancy services. Currently, local training institutions and organisations, Uganda and Malawi are using profiles purchased from ZOSS to address various education and training challenges. Visit us on:

www.zoss.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The project constitutes diffusion, into an erstwhile conservative market, of innovations connecting vocational training to employment through culling job content from practitioners and building it into courses. Habituation of markets to utilising the innovation paid off by producing high calibre human capital that is at a premium in the region.

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Signature: S. Jiri: Director

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