

Review:

OneVoice South Africa Career Indabas

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1. Background

OneVoice South Africa (OVSA) requested a review of their Career Indabas in order to decide whether to continue with these events or to implement alternative career guidance solutions in future.

The Career Indabas were held in 2013, 2014 and 2015 in Kwazulu Natal (KZN) and Eastern Cape. The purpose of these events was to highlight some of the opportunities available to young people to grow and develop their full potential, as well as to celebrate the partnership with schools in the Enterprise Project. Guest speakers as well as exhibitors from academic, corporate and government sectors were invited.

OVSA has described the objectives of the Career Indaba as providing Grade 11 participants with:

- the latest career information which supports them in accessing realistic opportunities and encourages them to research and plan for their futures
- the opportunity to engage with corporate and entrepreneurial role models and future employers
- useful contacts, e.g. tertiary institutions, that can help them make effective career decisions
- grant and scholarship opportunities
- skills builders
- an open platform where they can 'speak freely' in dance, rap, graffiti etc about how they feel about their futures
- entertainment, because this event is also a thank you to the learners for taking part in the programme throughout the year

The review focused on the following questions:

- What worked well at the OVSA Career Indabas?
- Were the OVSA Career Indaba's effective in:
 - Supporting young people with a platform to link to potential employers?
 - Facilitating learning about different career paths, e.g. entrepreneurship, internships, further studies?
 - Hearing young people's voices on developing their futures?
- What did not work well at the OVSA Career Indabas?
- What recommendations do you have to improve the OVSA Career Indabas?
- What alternative approaches could OVSA use to help young people plan for their future careers?

The review included an examination of documents relating to the OVSA Career Indabas, interviews with staff and other stakeholders, and research into the field of career guidance.

2. Findings

2.1 What worked well at the OVSA Career Indabas?

According to the respondents, the Career Indabas provided learners with relevant information on possible career choices and practical information on how to enrol at tertiary institutions and apply

for bursaries. Mention was made of the usefulness of instruction on how to fill in forms such as the Seta application form.

The atmosphere was vibrant and lively, and the entertainment was fresh and engaging. The Learner Resource Packs were well received and helped the learners feel special.

The Career Indabas also provided the opportunity for tertiary institutions to access their target market. Students filled in data cards and this has led to significant enrolment in, for example, Elangeni College.

The respondents noted that in KZN, in 2013, the standard of the Career Indaba was higher than in subsequent years. In this first year, there was:

- Better planning and organizing
- More learner engagement
- Opportunity to interact with other schools (in group work)
- A particularly relevant and engaging speaker, the writer of the Enterprise Project manual
- A practical and effective ABSA workshop on financial literacy and entrepreneurship

2.2 What did not work well at the OVSA Career Indabas?

It was a common feeling among the exhibitors that the learners weren't well prepared regarding the purpose of the event. The exhibitors came to this conclusion because the majority of learners didn't arrive at the exhibition tables with pen and book, ready to ask relevant questions.

There was concern among respondents that because of the lively, informal atmosphere of the event, and the lack of learner preparation before the event, many learners didn't take the event seriously and saw it as a free excursion. One respondent commented that with the music and dancing, "It felt like a club". The OVSA staff felt that only about 5% of the learners really benefited from the event and asked follow-up questions.

Respondents mentioned that there wasn't a coherent thread running through the day, and at times it was difficult to ascertain the purpose of the event. A typical comment was: "The poet and MC were engaging but it became more about them than about the kids and career guidance".

Learners had limited time at the tables and therefore exhibitors couldn't answer all their questions: there wasn't space and time for the learners to really talk about their futures. Exhibitors commented that "the conversation with the learners was frenetic, not meaningful" and "We didn't even have enough time to get the students onto a data base". They felt that they needed more one-on-one time with the learners to really have an impact on their lives and career choices.

Some speakers were more effective than others. In 2015, at a KZN venue, a skills development speaker spoke far above the level of the learners and lost their attention. A respondent commented that a speaker from the Central Applications office would have been more relevant and practical.

There needs to be more focus on linking learners with potential employers and entrepreneurs as the majority of learners will not have the possibility of studying at tertiary institutions after school. According to 2014 statistics (<http://www.southafrica.info/playyourpart/nyda->

[280212.htm#ixzz3LVMKnhr](#)), an estimated 73% of South Africa's youth, who make up 42% of the country's population, are unemployed. Therefore a workshop on how to start a business in South Africa should have been a component of all the Career Indabas.

One exhibitor from a tertiary institution complained that the learners at the event weren't their target market as their fees are high, and thus their time invested at the event didn't translate into enrolments.

Some respondents were concerned that there wasn't enough focus on rural schools participating in the Career Indabas.

2.3 Cost of the Career Indabas

The cost of implementing the Career Indabas is considerable. The projected cost of implementing the KZN and Eastern Cape Career Indabas, at four venues, in 2016 is R165 946 (see below). This cost excludes a percentage of staff salaries. The impact achieved doesn't seem to justify this cost.

1. KZN Career Indabas	Projected Costs	
	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Event Management		
Venues	5 000	5 700
Audio	2 100	2 394
catering	9 555	10 892
Learner and Educator Resource Packs	40 521	46 194
Table and Table Cloths	47 200	70 000
Publicity and Promotional Materials	4 000	4 564
Travel Staff	1 850	2 109
Travel learners	3 300	3 762
Delivery/Courier transport	23 000	26 220
First Aid Cover	3 000	3 420
	3 000	3 420
Total	142 526	178 675
2. Eastern Cape Career Indaba		
1 x venue		
4 x OVSA transport @ R100/trip	500	
Catering for 841 people @R20pp	400	
Equipment hire	16 820	
Learner transport support	1500	
	4200	
Total	23 420	26 698

3. Recommendations

Successful career guidance plays a critical role in preparing students for the world of work and helps to close the current gap in South Africa between school and life after school. Research has shown that career planning interventions also positively impact academic performance which leads to a broader array of career options for learners.

The recommendations below are shaped by two possibilities for OVSA going forward:

- Host a more effective career indaba or
- Explore other possibilities to provide career guidance for the youth

3.1 Host a more effective Career Indaba

The following suggestions are designed to assist OVSA to host a more effective Career Indaba:

- Focus effort, resources, speakers and exhibitors on one big Career Indaba in KZN
- Prepare the learners before the event in their classes: discuss the purpose of the Career Indaba, possible career paths, relevant websites (e.g. careerportal.co.za; career24.com; gostudy.com), and important questions, e.g.
 - What kinds of skills and experience does your organization look for in the employees you hire?
 - What are the characteristics of your most successful employees?
 - Are degrees important to advancing within your organization? Which ones?
 - What opportunities exist for job seekers with a Grade 12?
 - What internships/learnerships exist within your organization?
 - How would you describe your organization's culture?
- Follow up with the learners in their classrooms after the event: What did you learn at the Career Indaba? How will you use the information? What are your next steps?
- Implement a selection process so that only the interested and motivated learners attend the event and help to create the right tone for learning to happen
- Ensure there is a clear and coherent thread running through the event and focus on career guidance, not entertainment
- Choose speakers and exhibitors very carefully so that they engage the learners at their level and offer practical and relevant career guidance; ensure that tertiary institutions, employers and entrepreneurs are all well represented
- Ensure that planning is impeccable so that structure, focus and clarity support the achievement of the intended outcomes of the Career Indaba
- Each exhibitor could introduce themselves on stage with a 3 min professional video highlighting what they offer, and then spend most of the time engaging with the learners at the exhibition tables

- Organize and steer the students (in small groups) during the event so that they engage effectively with the exhibitors and get the most out of the Career Indaba
- Design an evaluation instrument to measure the impact of the event
- Exhibitors need feedback after the event:
 - Was the exhibition effective?
 - Were learners' questions answered adequately?

3.2 Explore alternative approaches to career guidance

- Start at Grade 9 level: before learners choose subjects, they need to understand career choices linked to subject choices and choose their career path wisely
- Develop Life Orientation (LO) teachers: Since career guidance is already part of the LO curriculum, this could be taught more effectively and have more impact if LO teachers were developed. LO teachers could then have an in-depth discussion with learners about career options and study and bursary applications (and teach learners how to complete application forms)
- Develop career portfolios: LO teachers ensure learners develop career portfolios which include CV, exam results, testimonials and examples of their work
- Find career guidance partners: many corporate and tertiary institutions are prepared to offer free workshops for students, e.g. The Design School of Southern Africa is willing to offer a free design workshop for students on their campus and also to help students develop a portfolio of evidence that will assist with applications
- Start with a competition: learners submit a business plan for a viable business idea: this will channel learners' energy in a positive direction and allow OVSA to select the really keen learners who deserve the opportunity of participating in an Entrepreneurship & Career Guidance winter school (Boston College is prepared to offer a couple bursaries as prizes). At winter school the select group of learners develops real skills and in-depth understanding
- Incubation of small businesses: after interviewing shortlisted learners from the above competition, business mentors could assist the learners with the best business plans to start small businesses: these learners could then form a professional learning community (PLC) of entrepreneurs
- Job shadowing and work placement: research shows that budding entrepreneurs need to experience successful businesses in action, so the PLC could be given an opportunity to job shadow and gain work experience during the holidays
- Field trips to find role models: the PLC could visit successful entrepreneurs, write an article on their experience and submit it to their local newspaper