

## PHASE II: PLASTICS CHAMBER RESEARCH PROJECT

### PURPOSE AND HIGH LEVEL OUTCOMES FOR PHASE III

The overall purpose and high level outcomes are summarised in the Table below.

Purpose	High level outcomes
To explore and provide research-based recommendations on how the plastics and related industries can best attract, develop and retain technical talent in order to ensure that the industry continues to “survive and thrive” in an increasingly competitive and changeable marketplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Validation and expansion of the qualitative information collected in Phases I and II about trends influencing skills in the plastics industry</li><li>• Further development of detailed skills profiles in a specific plastics industry value chain</li><li>• Provision of some parameters for influencing skills development -led change processes in the industry</li><li>• Identification of recommendations as to how the industry might best attract, develop and retain technical talent</li><li>• Collection of job-related information to support the development of a career guide for the Plastics Industry.</li></ul>

### METHODOLOGY FOR PHASE III

#### Selecting an appropriate research design

Given the nature of the research problem, a qualitative research design was selected.

- The research design included participative methods in order to “continue the conversation” with industry.
- It was also developmental, in the sense that the findings from previous phases were shared with participants in the focus groups and were deliberately used as “building blocks” or “conversation starters”. This approach helped to ensure continuity and to leverage existing knowledge and intellectual capital, rather than “reinventing the wheel”.

- The design allowed for a final round of verification and refinement of the key findings from Phases I and II, to further strengthen the overall robustness and reliability of the research.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Towards an industry strategy**

Based on the findings from Phases I to III and combining these with the lessons from the literature review, it was recommended that an industry strategy be developed. The strategy can be divided into two levels, namely a macro-strategy for the industry and a micro-strategy for individual enterprises.

#### **Macro-strategy – Developing a Community of Practice (CoP)**

The purpose of the macro strategy is to bring people together who are interested and committed to change and use them to form a “coalition of the willing”.

#### **Micro-strategy at enterprise level – Developing a culture of change and innovation**

The purpose of the micro strategy is to change management styles, develop skills, make people comfortable with change, increase employee engagement and thereby improve retention, knowledge transfer.

#### **Critical success factors for developing the plastics industry strategy**

The following were identified as the critical success factors for the development of the industry strategy.

- **Addressing the leadership issue**

Based on the participation from industry in Phases I, II and III, there appeared to be a lack of interest in the process from top managers. The study found that the solution to creating change in the industry should not depend entirely on top managers, but lies in harnessing the energy of individuals in industry who are already committed to changing things.

- **Certified Plastics Practitioner (CPP) - Making the invisible cadre visible**

There was a proposal to adopt a programme similar to the Canadian Plastic Practitioner Programme. The proposed programme will help establish a cohort of individuals who would contribute to the collecting, sharing and implementation of new ideas, discoveries and ways of doing things. Certified Plastics Practitioners (CPPs) would be ideally positioned to operationalise and develop a knowledge

repository as well as establishing and driving collaboration platforms for the industry. A CPP strategy would also help the industry to attract, develop and retain technical, innovative and entrepreneurial talent through.

- **Reframing skills development as skills management**

It was proposed that the plastics industry reframes the concept of skills *development* as skills *management*. A Canadian report used as a benchmark study, found few examples where skills development was consciously used as a strategy for retaining people, however they cited numerous studies which confirmed that a good part of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of workers is associated with issues related to their professional development. It was recommended that mechanisms for professional development include the following:

- Focussing on the soft skills required to drive change at project level (including preparing managers to be trainers)
- Using social media to foster engagement, share ideas and motivate individuals
- Embedding training practices/ techniques within a philosophical framework.

**Knowledge repository/ knowledge transfer/ knowledge management**

An important role of the proposed Certified Plastics Practitioner will be to document improvement processes. This information can be collected and housed in a knowledge repository. There is therefore a need for designing and implementing a “Knowledge repository” for the industry to collect the experiences, lessons and successes and disseminate useful and relevant models, ideas.