



10 June 2019

SATN /Irish Entrepreneurship Programme for Staff and Students of SATN Member Institutions
13 -17 May 2019

In May this year, following weeks of preparation and research, the South African Technology Network (SATN) in partnership with the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) and the Irish Embassy, launched the South Africa/Ireland Entrepreneurship Programme, hosted by the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) in Galway, Ireland.

In response to the research into the curricula of entrepreneurship offered in higher education, it was found that it was far too theoretical, with limited access for students to develop their ideas, limited mentors and the lack of business interest in students. Furthermore, the SATN supports Nicolaide's (2011) study which maintains that the South African curriculum in the higher education system needs to be transformed so as to make entrepreneurship an important subject to be taught to all students.

The five-day training in Ireland was attended by entrepreneurial students and staff of the member institutions of the SATN. (group photo to be added). The training was focused on the success of the Irish Institutes and was facilitated by the Entrepreneurship experts of GMIT and Cork Institute of Technology (CIT).

The staff and students had the opportunity to engage with successful Irish Entrepreneurs on how to improve their business ideas, marketing and funding. They also met with potential investors and build a network of entrepreneurs and business owners who provided them with practical advice on their entrepreneurial journey.

On May 13th, the SATN delegation was welcomed to the GMIT by Ms Cait Noone, Vice President International and Engagement, Mr John-Joe O'Farrell, Director for International Engagement and Mr Turlough Rafferty, who serves as the Acting Manager of the GMIT iHub in Mayo. The CEO of SATN, Dr Anshu Padayachee, emphasised that the overall goal of the programme was to develop a curriculum tailored to meet the demands for entrepreneurship and innovation in South Africa which are seen as the key factors in tackling unemployment and poverty.

The candidates arrived with a variety of entrepreneurial queries, some of which included specific concerns about their business ideas, and more general questions about the practicalities and challenges of starting a company from scratch. From cosmetic products to financial literacy apps, business advisory service providers as well as a property leasing companies, there was a diversity of interests and ideas within the delegation. The sessions taught over this five-day period were centered on offering guidance and skills about business ideation, gap analysis, market research, marketing and messaging, as well as introducing students to the Lean Canvas Methodology, a quick yet comprehensive way of identifying the pros and cons of a business model without having to go through the process of creating a business plan. Additionally, students were also taught how to create a value proposition and develop an entrepreneurship ecosystem at an institute level,

culminating in a Dragon’s Den-style event where they received the chance to pitch and defend their business ideas to a panel of judges.

At the end of the programme, students offered their feedback on the various workshops, highlighting that they had left the sessions with the skills and confidence to work on their respective start-ups. However, they mentioned that they wouldn’t have been able to commence with their business ideas without the knowledge and expertise provided over the five-day period. It is thus recommended that this programme be offered by universities during student orientation so that they have enough knowledge and information to work on their businesses, encouraging a sense of independence and self-sufficiency necessary for the production of successful entrepreneurs.

A similar programme will be replicated in South Africa in October this year and will be offered to about 100 students from the SATN member institutions. This programme will be co-facilitated by the South African and Irish teams, as well as business and industry partners who will be invited to advise, help and invest in the start-ups emerging from this programme. It is also envisioned that Government departments and parastatals, such as the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), Department of Trade and Industry and Economic development offer additional support and supervision to the start-ups, especially during their infancy where they are most vulnerable to failure.

The process of creating a business can be difficult, lonely and unrewarding, with a high failure rate and lack of returns necessary to support a team of people from top to bottom. This SATN-short skills programme will help young South African entrepreneurs weather those obstacles and challenges, equipping them with the support, knowledge and skills to ensure their businesses are not only successful, but integral to building a vibrant and innovative economy. It is hoped that initiatives like these will go a long way in forging the kind of society which will support and nurture the dreams, aspirations and needs of all South Africans, young and old.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Seated - Her Excellency, Ambassador Maya (South African Ambassador to Ireland), Dr Michael Hannon ;Front row - Cáit Noone, Nontokoza Ngcobo, Mudau Mukonanyi, Londolozza Ntuli, Prof Dennis Dzansi, Dr Anshumali Padayachee, Ziyanda Badela; Middle row – Tony O’Kelly, Dr Jan Grundling, Senisha Moonsamy, Dr Makhosazana Vezi-Magigaba, Lady-Peace Gumbi, Kogie Pretorius, Ayanda Landu, Sizwe Nkambule, Dr Helen McGuirk; Back row – Willem Geerlings Mfundo Mpulo, PHEMELELA Scott, Turlough Rafferty, Bongani Sechaba.