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About the Presenter:

Rènette du Toit holds a DLitt et Phil (Psychology) degree from University of Johannesburg. She is a registered research psychologist at the Health Professions Council of South Africa and a member of the Career Guidance Consulting Group under the leadership of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

She has been a researcher at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) for 15 years. She joined EE Research Focus in 2007 as a research manager. Her direct research interests and activities relate to human resources and skills development, labour market issues, and career psychology. In the field of career psychology her interest and expertise lie in the field of vocational identity and career guidance information models and systems. She has adapted and standardised Holland's Self-Directed Search for South Africa and has conducted cross-cultural research on the theory. She also developed the Career Preference Inventory for use in the South African context. She was the project leader of Career Mentor, a computerised career guidance and information system used widely by schools and higher education and training institutions in the 1990s.

Her recent research work relates broadly to human resources and skills development in different sectors of the South African economy, providing her with a framework to understand the South African labour market and the challenges individuals face in entering and progressing in the labour market.

Marina Mayer is Lead Economist in the Development Planning Division at the Development Bank of Southern Africa. She holds a Masters Degree in Economics (cum laude) from the University of the Witwatersrand. She has extensive experience in economic research and public management across South Africa's three spheres of government (local, provincial and national). Her research interests are centered on poverty alleviation and include employment and the labour market, the green economy, fiscal policy, industrial policy, trade policy, economic integration in Africa and infrastructure development. She will commence formal studies in psychology in 2011, with the aspiration of working as a counseling psychologist.

Title of Paper: From Misery to Meaning? The Plight of New entrants / school leavers in the South African Labour Market

Abstract:

The key conditions that are necessary in order to develop an effective framework to facilitate and sustain the process of people's working lives are *inter alia*: a healthy economy and labour market; access to education and training for everyone; well organised pathways that connect initial education with work and further study; safety nets for those at risk; good information and guidance systems; and effective coordination between relevant institutions.

In developing countries unemployment and concomitant poverty rates reinforce each other to deny a large proportion of the potentially economically active population with access to a work-life. In South Africa, the sheer quantum of the problem is unparalleled as evidenced by an official unemployment rate of 24% and an expanded rate of 34%. This latter figure includes workers who have given up hope and who are not looking for jobs anymore (Stats SA, 2010). Unemployment rates of such proportions mean people will take whatever work they can get. The most vulnerable group in this unemployment equation is the youth, who account for three-quarters of the unemployed. For this grouping the notion of career or work-life development and planning remains a dream. The lack of an integrated national career guidance and information system reinforces the obstacles confronted by young people in entering the labour market.

This paper sketches the labour market and related socio-economic context in South Africa which has a major effect on any integrative work-life planning and development of individuals. It further shows the importance of labour market and related information to career counseling practitioners. The paper falls in Theme 2 of the JIVA conference: Boom, bust and suitability, and more specifically in the sub-theme negotiating the labour market.