

SERVICE DELIVERY REVIEW

SDR

A learning magazine for the Public Service

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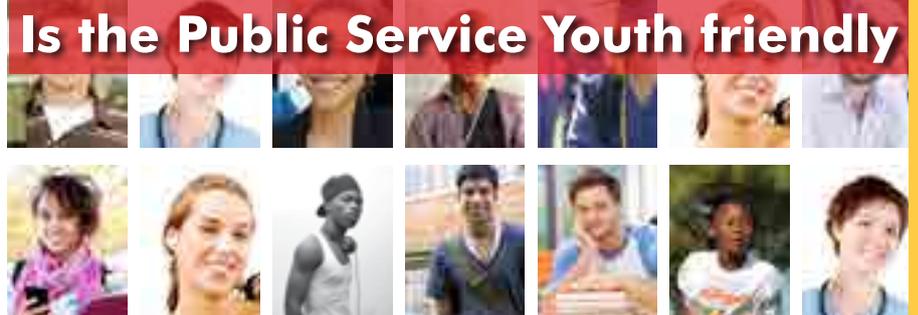
Maximising South Africa's Demographic Dividend *Harnessing Youth Power*



CafeSociety *An Innovative Initiative Up-skills Young People*



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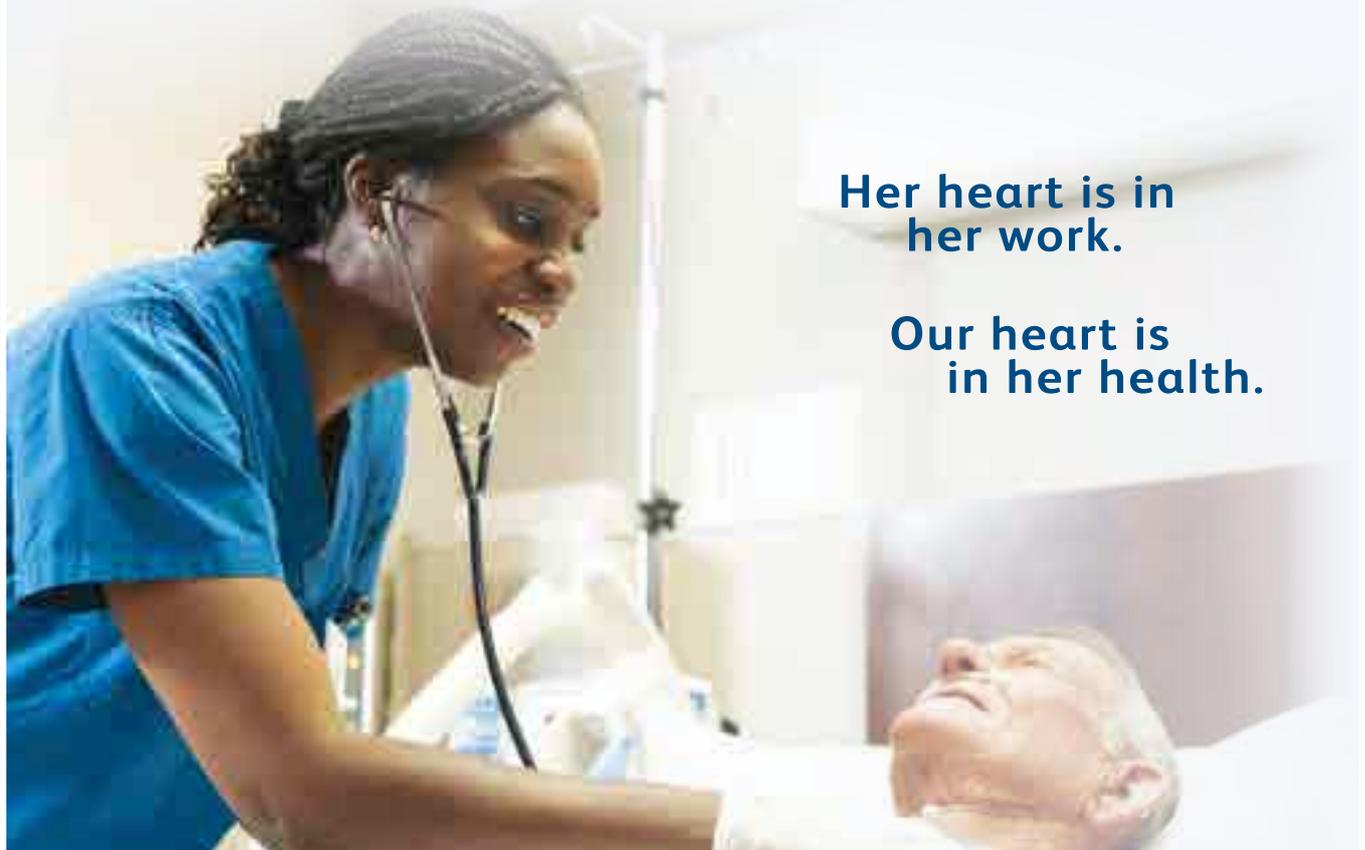
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Invitation for contributions

The *Service Delivery Review* is a learning and knowledge tool for the public service. It provides a platform for debate and the exchange of ideas in aid of improving service delivery.

Public servants, academics, communities and other interested parties are encouraged and welcome to respond to and raise issues in this regard.

Letters and feedback should not be more than 500 words and the maximum length for articles is 2000 words.

For more information please contact LawrenceT@dpsa.gov.za or Dudley@dpsa.gov.za

South Africa's YOUTH Asset



Dudley Moloi

Published mid-2014, the Africa Government and Public Services (G&PS) Insights Journal of the public sector division of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) distils the preparedness of African Public Services in the face of what it describes as the “mega trends and transformative forces” that are shaping the African continent and the world. Chief among these “transformative forces” are the demographic changes that are sweeping across the world.

The swelling tide of migrants from either war-torn or poor countries of the South to their well-to-do counterparts has been powerfully brought home via our television sets. Then there are the slower and less dramatic shifts in the internal population structures of individual countries. In general, the populations of the developed countries of the North are ageing. Those of the developing South have seen bulging populations of the so-called “Generation I” of young people whose service needs and even expectations on how these ought to be delivered are radically different to those of their elder fellow citizens.

Writing in the aforementioned journal, PwC Strategy Leader (South Market Area), Stanley Subramoney, describes the South African “Generation I” as anything else but similar to their elders. Roughly constituting over 30% of the population, this segment of the population is “individualistic, informal, interactive, informed and innovative,” writes Subramoney. Their outlook to life, he adds, is intrinsically technology driven in their aspirations, as well as in ways that they wish to access public services.

In this edition of the SDR, the youth theme is further picked up in the article *“Maximising South Africa’s Demographic Dividend”*, which was written for us by University of Cape Town researcher, Morne Oosthuizen. Simply put, the “Demographic Dividend” arises from savings that accrue on the part of households and the state, as young people come of working age and therefore get weaned off their financial dependence.

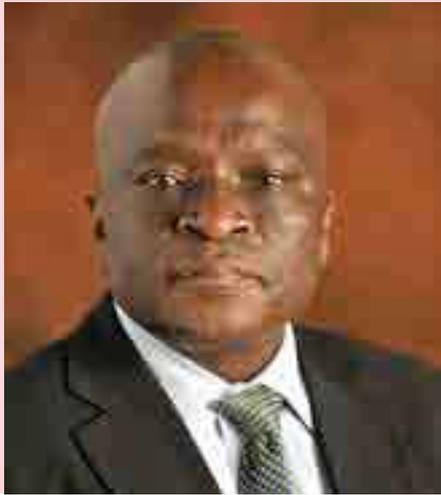
However, the “payback period” is not automatic. A slew of pre-conditions have to be met in order to realise the “demographic dividend”, as Oosthuizen explains. First the young have to be healthy enough and properly skilled to be in a position to take up opportunities that the labour market opens up. Secondly, there is the killer assumption that the economy would be in a position to absorb young people of working age through jobs bearing growth.

Government has clear strategies and policies on how to take advantage of South Africa’s increasingly young population. Most direct is the goal of increasing the numbers of young people in the employ of the Public Service as discussed in the article: *“Is the Public Service Youth-Friendly”*.

This edition also contains other articles that shed some light on the issue of youth and the prospects that the older generation could help pave for them. One, which needs particular mention, is an article on a Youth Cafe in Mitchells Plain, on the Cape Flats, in the Western Cape Province. The article underscores persistent societal inequalities that affect young people the most. It reflects that the multi-dimensional nature of the challenges that youth face, call for innovative problem solving and in most cases a nod of encouragement.

South Africa’s young population is a potential plus to the country. On the other hand, “a marginalised youth can also be a major problem,” argued Dr Mo Ibrahim, during his 2012 Nelson Mandela Memorial Lecture on social cohesion. ■

Dudley Moloi



RAISING THE BAR IN ETHICAL CONDUCT



“ Current anti-corruption initiatives ought to further raise the bar in the fight against corruption, writes the Minister for the Public Service and Administration, ” argues Advocate Ngoako Ramatlhodi.

The drafters of South Africa's post-apartheid Constitution had foresight of the potentially corrosive effect of corruption on most aspects of society. They clearly understood the fact that corruption is fundamentally inimical to development. When unethical conduct and corruption reign supreme, it is the poorest of our communities who are affected most. The services that are meant for communities do not reach them as resources are diverted to enrich the few greedy officials.

It is with as dim a view as the above that section 195 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa singles out ethical conduct as one of the cornerstones of an efficient and effective Public Service. This section of the Constitution also informs the laws, policies and programmes that Government had put in place over the past 21 years in order to root-out corruption in society.

The Integrity Management Framework is the most notable of efforts to contain and eradicate corruption in the Public Service. The Framework was approved by Cabinet in 2013 in order to integrate previously fragmented anti-corruption efforts. Crucially, the Framework also contains new and far-reaching proposals for managing existing policies, such as

the declaration of financial interests by public servants and remunerative work outside the Public Service.

While the wide-ranging provisions of the Framework represent on-going commitment on the part of Government to professionalise and build a corruption free Public Service in line with the vision of the National Development Plan (NDP), the Framework is not without short comings in its current form. Most glaring is the fact that provision for the disclosure of financial interests does not apply to all employees in the Public Service, which has opened doors for officials at lower levels in the Public Service to exploit this loophole.

However, the Department of Public Service and Administration is in the process of amending the Public Service Regulations of 2001 to improve the effectiveness of the Financial Disclosure Framework. The amendments would make it compulsory for other employment categories to disclose their financial interests.

The other issue that may require revisiting is the provision for remunerative work outside in the Public Service. Currently, section 30 of the Public Service Act of 1994, conditionally allows employees to

undertake remunerative work outside their employment in the Public Service, which may result in conflict of interest. Most important, remunerative work outside the Public Service is likely to affect service delivery as employees concentrate on their private employment as opposed to their Public Service responsibilities.

When we realised that unethical behaviour does not only affect the Public Service but the whole Administration of government, we introduced the Public Administration and Management Act (PAMA), which was signed into law by the President in December 2014. The Act seeks to provide a legal framework for bringing uniformity in the key pillars making up the public administration. The Act further provides that all employees in the Public Service must disclose their financial interests.

The key to winning back the trust that corruption (real or perceived) surely erodes in the Public Service requires more than effort on our part as public servants. It is about raising the bar of integrity as we strive to be a shining example of how public servants should conduct themselves. ■

Batho Pele awards honour public servants

Minister for Public Service and Administration (MPSA), Advocate Ngoako Ramathodi, hosted the 3rd annual National Batho Pele Excellence Awards (NBPEA) on the 13th of November 2015, in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province.

The theme for the 2015 awards was "Batho Pele, Putting People First", which reiterated Government's commitment to putting people at the centre service delivery. While the NBPEAs are primarily an occasion for the recognition and rewarding excellence in the Public Service, the awards are also a means of entrenching professionalism and selfless service.

The 2015 NBPEA drew nominations countrywide in 10 categories, which ranged from the "Best Batho Pele Team of the Year" to "Life Time Achievers". Each category was organised in a three-tier prize, which corresponded with Gold, Silver and Bronze, or first, second and third prizes. In addition to trophies, certificates, and tablet computers or hospitality vouchers, the prizes had a cash value of R10 000 (Gold), R5 000 (Silver) and R2 000 (Bronze).



Started in 2012, the BPEA are increasingly becoming a highly anticipated event in the calendar of the Public Service not only for their ceremonial value. They are also a mechanism for the sharing best practices among public servants and for gauging the satisfaction of citizens towards government performance.

"The awards are not only about encouraging public servants but also about listening to our people and the people have spoken," said Public Service and Administration Deputy Minister, Ayanda Dlodlo, in her congratulatory remarks.

Minister Faith Muthambi conferred the awards in her capacity as acting Minister for Public Service and Administration during Minister Ngoako Ramathodi's absence due to a bereavement in the family. ■

NGOs Mean Business

Ditikeni's distribution to beneficiaries increases by 20%

The Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), Ditikeni Investment Holding Group, has announced that its distribution to beneficiaries rose for the ninth year in a row, increasing its 2015 annual distribution by 20%. The total distribution to beneficiaries now stands on R10,5m per year, while the net asset value exceeded R100m in the 2015 financial year and revenue was up 52%.

"While the numbers all looked good, Ditikeni remained focused on ensuring its beneficiaries adopt innovative and resourceful sustainability strategies to continue their vital work," said chairperson, Sahra Ryklief. "Considering that we started with R2.8m from our shareholders in 1999, this is certainly an accomplishment to be proud of."

As expected, the beneficiaries are proud, but as Eric Atmore, the founder and director of the Centre for Early Childhood Development (CECD) said, the monetary part is secondary. "There are two benefits of being part of Ditikeni. The obvious one is financial, but the more important one is the thinking behind Ditikeni.



Attitude change

"The primary attitude change among non-profits was from: 'We are an established organisation and we do good work, therefore the donors owe us'. Now the thinking is: 'We have a service or product, which makes a meaningful impact and difference on peoples lives, therefore donors should invest in us'," he explained.

Atmore said Ditikeni is a case study that should be written up and copied across the world. "Where do you get 23 non-profits together to pool R2.8m, that then gets invested, and today it's worth in the region of R130m?"

One of CECD's components is building the leadership in the EDC sector. In 1994, there were 135 functioning ECD training providers across the country. Today, there are just 62, and 73 have closed. They were invited to join Ditikeni, and all but one declined.

"Each ECD non-profit would say that they closed for funding reasons, but the real reason they closed was lack of leadership and lack of strategy. There is more money in the ECD sector than there has ever been before. But the big thing about Ditikeni is that its learning and influence has made us think differently," Atmore said.

Enormous benefits

Nomfundo Walaza, chairperson at the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT), agrees that being part of the Ditikeni 'family' has had enormous benefits. "I don't know

where the two million individuals that are reached by the work of SCAT and the plethora of Ditikeni partners would be without the services we provide, and which are made possible by being part of the group," she said. ■

Bizcommunity

South Africa comes third in Open Budget Index

South Africa came in third, after New Zealand and Sweden, in the 2015 Open Budget Index (OBI) Survey, in recognition of the country's commitment to a transparent budget process.

Over the years, South Africa has consistently entrenched its reputation as a global leader in budget transparency. This is evidenced in the expansive budget information that is published for public analysis and scrutiny, as well as in its performance in international budget surveys.

Past survey results have been used to identify gaps in budget transparency and informed measures and mechanisms adopted to address those gaps. The reforms implemented between 2010 and 2015 include, among others:

- Introduction of a new framework for Strategic Plans and a framework for Annual Performance Plans
- Procurement reforms undertaken by the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer to enhance transparency in bidding for Government contracts, and

source: National Treasury

- Enhanced commitment of the South African Government to engaging with civil society organizations to ensure increased participation in the budget process.

In 2010 South Africa obtained first place in the Open Budget Index Survey. The 2015 ranking of third out of the 102 countries that were surveyed reflected increased emphasis placed on budget participation. In view of South Africa's commitment to improving budget participation, the National Treasury is pursuing the following measures:

- Continued support to civil society in their preparation of citizen-friendly publications about national budgets tabled in Parliament.
- A possible collaboration with civil society organizations that includes looking into creating a data portal in the near future will be looked into, in order to provide data in a user-friendly format and create a social dialogue on budget issues.

South Africa remains committed to constantly improving the budget process in order to maintain its international reputation as a global leader in budget transparency. South Africa continually seeks to enhance the expansive information it provides to its citizens on how public resources are generated and used with the aim of improving national budgeting. ■

Prisons escapes reduced

National Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), Zachariya Modise, has welcomed the constant reduction in the number of escapes from South Africa's 243 correctional centres. According to the Department of Correctional Services' (DCS) latest (2014/15) annual report, the department managed to reduce escapes to 0.031%, with 99.97% of the country's 159,563 inmates remaining safely behind bars. Forty nine escapes were reported in the 2014/15 financial year, compared to 60 in 2013/14.

Modise said: "The efficiency, and effectiveness, of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) safe and secure custody programme, at the country's 243 correctional centres, has reached unprecedented levels of 99.97%.

"Of the 0.031% of escapes in 2014, the majority were re-arrested and are back behind bars. This represents a continued decline, from as high as 1,244 escapes per year in 1995, and we commend the majority of our Correctional Officials for this achievement.

"For instance, since its inception in 2002, the Ebongweni state-of-the-art correctional facility in Kokstad

in KwaZulu-Natal, has not recorded a single escape. This high risk maximum facility is managed on closed maximum security principles, and currently caters for approximately 1,067 offenders in the maximum security classification from all over the country.

"Following any escape, an investigation is immediately conducted and appropriate action is taken against any official or offender found guilty of an offence. The action taken is dependent on the nature, and severity of the offence. DCS, in conjunction with the South African Police Service, inclusive of their detective and intelligence divisions, and other law

enforcement agencies is leaving no stone unturned in the investigations into these escapes."

Modise added: "We would like to warn members of the public that in terms of the Correctional Services Act (Act 111 of 1998), any person who assists an inmate in escaping, or attempting to escape, from any correctional centre or from any place where he or she may be in custody, is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine or to incarceration for a period not exceeding ten years or to such incarceration without the option of a fine or both. Further, no person may, without lawful authority, supply, convey or cause to be supplied or conveyed to any inmate, or hide or place for his or her use any document, intoxicating liquor, dagga, drug, opiate, money, or any other article.

"We also want to extend our gratitude to communities that have upped their cooperation with law enforcement agencies to improve our re-arrest of escapees. We call upon you to provide no sanctuary for fugitives from justice in any corner of our country. We will also not hesitate to take action against any Correctional Official found guilty of related unlawful acts or omissions. We are calling upon citizens to do their part in this regard, as Corrections is a Societal Responsibility," Modise added.

Modise said that as part of an integrated security systems approach, security improvements included the implementation of security technology systems at identified centres and training

on the implementation of the gang management strategy. During the 2015/16 financial year, body scanning equipment were being installed at Kgoši Mampuru II, Johannesburg, Pollsmoor, St. Albans, Durban Westville, Groenpunt and Barberton correctional centres, he said.

"Cell phone detection systems are being rolled out in new-generation correctional facilities including Tswelopele (Kimberley) and Brandvlei (Western Cape). Other current installations are targeting Johannesburg Management Area and Kgoši Mampuru II Management Area in Gauteng, Pollsmoor and Goodwood in Western Cape as well as Durban-Westville and Umzinto in KwaZulu-Natal. The intention, long-term, is to have cell phone detection in all correctional facilities," according to Modise.

As part of the department's Back to Basics campaign, special emphasis was being placed on security measures, with increased visibility and tightening up of security measures at correctional centres, as well as increased supervision of officials.

Security measures include:

- Drastic enhancing of security at all access control points;
- Increase in impromptu, and periodic, internal and external patrols, and periodic spot checks and cell counts, at irregular intervals/frequencies;
- Adequate staff deployment, which is of utmost importance, to ensure that sufficient managers, and officials, are on duty;
- Increased, and intensified, visitor searches at exit and entry points;
- Strict adherence to visitation times;
- Confinement and the minimization of movements, of high risk inmates;
- Deployment, and increased visibility, of Emergency Support Teams, especially at high risk centres where maximum, and remand, detainees are incarcerated;
- Limitation of unnecessary movement of inmates between sections, and increased vigilance during offender escorts;
- Introduction of special security measures at strategic sections, including hospital sections and/or sections where religious, and social workers, are at risk in correctional centres;
- Effective management and immediate attention to complaints of inmates;
- Active involvement of professional staff (social workers, medical staff, religious workers and so on) to support inmates and staff; and
- Proactive handling, and management, of information received from inmates and/or other sources regarding planned escapes or other security threats. ■

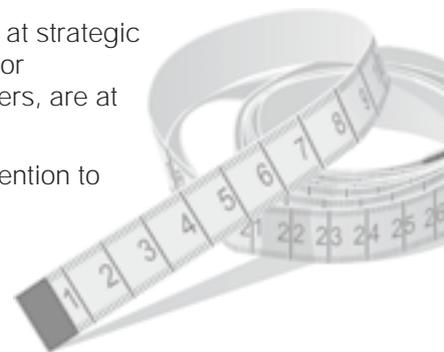
The Citizen

Public Service vacancy rate edging closer to targets

By March 2015, the average vacancy rate has gone down to 11, 58% which is closer to the set target of 10%, while the average vacancy rate as at 31 December 2014 was 14.16%, according to the 2014/15 annual report of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA).

The DPSA is responsible for the continuous monitoring of the vacancy rate and the filling of posts within the Public Service and reporting the trends to Cabinet. Two such reports were submitted to Cabinet during the 2014/15 financial year.

According to the DPSA report, the median period to fill posts during the periods 1 October 2014 to 31 December 2014, and the period 1 January 2015 to 31 March 2015 was 5.02 and 3.05 months respectively, which is within the target of 6 months. In respect of posts filled during the period 1 January 2015 to 31 March 2015 the median period to fill posts in the Public Service amounted to 3, 05 months; which remains within the set target of 6 months. ■



Auditor-General reports slightly improved audit results for government

“Were it not for the slow response in addressing audit recommendations aimed at improving internal control systems and eliminating governance risks and other concerns raised by his office, the national and provincial governments would have recorded much-improved audit results for the 2014/15 financial year.”

Auditor-General (AG) Kimi Makwetu said on the occasion of releasing the audit results at the end of November 2015.

Releasing the 2015 audit outcomes of national and provincial government departments and public entities (auditees), Makwetu said he had observed that management at most auditees (73%) “have been slow to respond to the (audit) recommendations aimed at assisting them to improve key internal controls and addressing identified risk areas. This contributed to audit outcomes for 2014/15 that only improved slightly since 2013/14”.

Makwetu said that while the marginal improvement in audit outcomes is commendable, the Government could have recorded a higher margin of improved results had leadership stepped up the pace in addressing internal control deficiencies identified in the previous audit. Stepping up the pace is about consistently narrowing the space for possible errors or abuse in handling public resources through leadership-

driven efforts. This, the AG said, required auditees to perform the following basics properly and consistently:

- Implementing plans to address deficiencies in financial controls based on commitments already made.
- Providing effective leadership and monitoring achievement of performance targets.
- Reviewing and monitoring compliance with key laws and legislation over financial matters.

“Those auditees that have progressed, or maintained their previous years positive audit outcomes, have stuck to these basics of clean governance, practically showing that clean audits are easy to attain and maintain if these fundamentals are in place,” the AG said.

The AG’s latest report covers a total of 468 auditees, which include 167 national and provincial departments and 301 public entities with a total budget of R1 111 billion for the year under review.

Improvements in clean audits

Makwetu said the number of auditees that received a financially unqualified audit opinion with no findings (clean audit) had improved slightly from 118 (26%) in 2013/14 to 131 (28%) in 2014/15. Departments made a significant contribution towards clean audit opinions in 2014/15, increasing their total from 40 to 47, while 84 public entities received clean audits.

Among the provinces, the biggest contributors to the total number of clean audits were the Free State (six – 32% of their auditees), KwaZulu-Natal (eight – 22% of their

auditees), Gauteng (19 – 54% of their auditees), and the Western Cape (20 – 83% of their auditees), while 23 of the 35 ministerial portfolios (66%) contributed to the 65 clean audits in national government. While regressions in the number of auditees with clean audit opinions were noted in Mpumalanga, the Northern Cape and North West. Also noteworthy is that 70% of the auditees (85) with clean audits in the previous year were able to sustain their clean audit status.

The economic sectors, employment and infrastructure development cluster, performed the best of the five government clusters, with 19 financially unqualified audit opinions, which included five clean audits. None of the seven departments in the justice, crime prevention and security cluster obtained a clean audit, although four were financially unqualified.

Provinces register more improved audit results

Six provinces recorded net improvements (i.e. more improvements than regressions). Gauteng's audit outcomes showed little movement (although still with a high number of clean audits), while in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape, the audit outcomes regressed. However, while acknowledging the net improvement in audit outcomes as a "good indicator that overall, audit outcomes are improving, albeit slightly," Makwetu voiced his concern that, with the exception of Gauteng and the Western Cape, the pace of auditees maintaining clean audit opinions had slowed or regressed across provinces. While (audit) outcomes remain stagnant in the other five provinces, the overall outcomes for both the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga have regressed when compared to 2013/14.

Legislatures leading by example

Makwetu said he was encouraged by the legislative sector's positive audit results. The legislature sector consists of Parliament and the nine provincial legislatures. Of these 10, six received clean audit opinions, while the North West, Northern Cape and Limpopo legislatures received unqualified opinions with findings. Only the KwaZulu-Natal legislature received a qualified opinion.

"This significant improvement bodes well and sets a positive tone in the drive towards wholesale clean administration in the public sector," said the AG. ■



WHAT THE AG MEANS BY ...

FINANCIALLY UNQUALIFIED AUDIT OPINION WITH NO FINDINGS (CLEAN AUDIT)

An auditee receives a clean audit opinion when its financial statements are unqualified, with no reported audit findings in respect of either reporting on predetermined objectives or compliance with key legislation.

FINANCIALLY UNQUALIFIED OPINION WITH FINDINGS

These are auditees that have passed the critical test of fair presentation of financial statements, which means that they have accounted fairly for their financial transactions. However, they had findings on their performance information or compliance with key legislation, or both of these aspects.

QUALIFIED AUDIT OPINIONS

A number of auditees in this category furnished the AGSA with performance information that either was not useful or was unreliable, which compromised their ability to account effectively. In some cases, these auditees had inadequate controls over compliance with key legislation.

ADVERSE OPINIONS

The entities that received adverse opinions performed similarly to those that received qualified opinions, except that information that was not useful or reliable was common in most areas of their financial statements rather than being limited to certain areas.

DISCLAIMED AUDIT OPINIONS

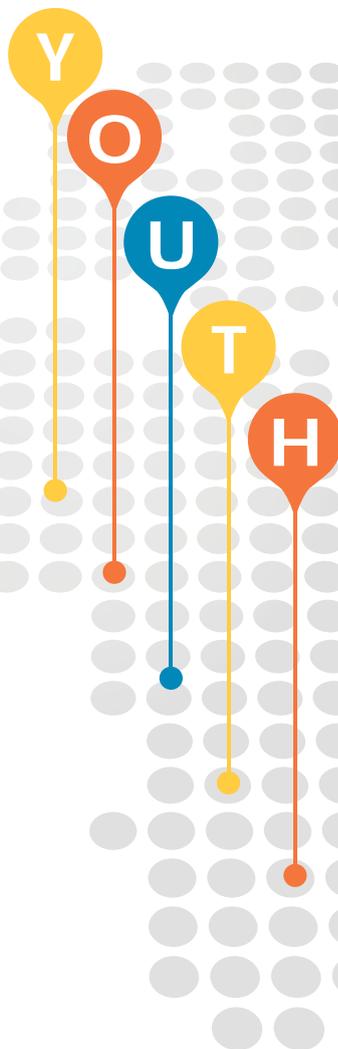
Nationally, there was a decline in the number of auditees that received disclaimed opinions, from 22 (5% in 2014) to 14 (3%). These auditees were unable to provide the required evidence for the information presented in their financial statements – therefore auditors were unable to conclude or express an opinion on the credibility of their financial statements. Also, auditees with adverse and disclaimed opinions typically are not complying with key legislation.



Maximising South Africa's Demographic Dividend

Morné Oosthuizen of the University of Cape Town's Development Policy Research Unit, explains how South Africa could harness the power of its young population.

South Africa's highly unequal society is reflected in its economy, in which a sophisticated modern sector with high incomes exists alongside a low income informal sector. High levels of unemployment and widespread poverty remain two of the most pressing socio-economic issues facing the country. One of the policy responses has been to gradually expand the country's social welfare system. As a result, South Africa has, by middle-income country standards, a reasonably well-developed welfare system that covers children, the elderly and the disabled. Thus, by early 2013, there were roughly 16.1 million grant beneficiaries in South Africa (SASSA 2013).



South Africa poised for significant aging over the next century

South Africa has a relatively young population, with around half the population under the age of 25 years. Population growth generally ranged between 2.0% and 2.5% per annum since the mid-1960s, until the advent of the HIV/ Aids pandemic that slowed population growth dramatically during the 2000s. Fertility rates have been in decline since at least 1960. As a result, the South African population is poised for significant aging over the next century. This process of aging has important implications for the provision of public services, the labour market, and the need for retirement savings, amongst others.

The aging of South African society represents an important opportunity. The transition from high fertility and high mortality, to low fertility and low mortality results in a temporary shift in the composition of the population. Initially, the demographic transition creates a boom generation: a series of cohorts that are unusually large. The immediate effect is to place pressure on working-age cohorts, who face increased demands from their dependents. However, as fertility falls and these large cohorts age, the working age population grows relative to the dependent population. This fall in dependency releases resources that can be used to raise living standards, invest in human capital or save, and is termed the first demographic dividend.



First demographic dividend

How big is this dividend?

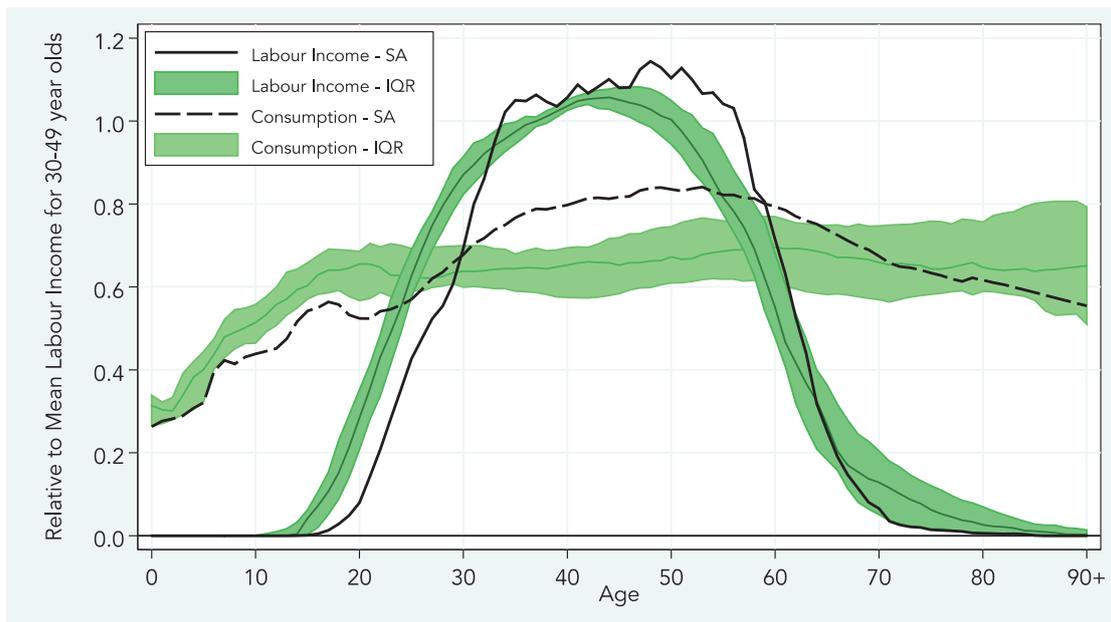
What is the scope for policy to increase its magnitude or prolong its duration?

To answer these questions, we can use National Transfer Accounts (NTA). NTA first asks to what extent an individual or cohort is able to finance their consumption through their labour income, whether there is a lifecycle surplus (labour income exceeds consumption) or deficit. Then, it asks how deficits are financed, through transfers either from the state (called public transfers) or from relatives and friends (called private transfers), or through income from assets or savings.

An important strength of this methodology in analysing the demographic dividend is that it allows for the gradual transition from dependency to independence, where traditional measures of the extent of a society's dependence on working-age adults do not. For example, dependency ratios—defined as the ratio of dependent to non-dependent individuals—classify individuals under the age of 15 years and those aged 65 years or older as dependent, while those aged 15 to 64 are classified not dependent. In reality, this is not the case as Figure 1 illustrates. Gradually rising average consumption is only exceeded by labour income at age 30, but by age 60 labour income again

falls below consumption. In other words, the extent of dependence increases at young ages as consumption rises, and falls as young cohorts begin entering the labour market. During the prime working ages, individuals are *on* average economically independent, but the extent of this independence narrows quickly during the late fifties and increases dependence for cohorts in their sixties. This is very different from the picture of full dependence to age 14, full independence from 15 to 64 years, and full dependence from 65 years onwards painted by conventional dependency ratios.

Figure 1: Average Labour Income and Consumption across the Lifecycle (2005)



Source: Own calculations, SA NTA

Notes: Labour income includes compensation and the return to labour from household-owned farms and businesses. Consumption includes private and public consumption. NTA countries included in calculating the interquartile ranges (IQR) are Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, UK, Uruguay, USA and Vietnam. For comparability, all age profiles are normalised relative to each country's 'peak labour income' – mean per capita labour income between the ages of 30 and 49 years.



Financing deficits for the young and the old

That the very young and the very old should have lifecycle deficits is not unexpected, given legislative and societal norms restricting their involvement in the labour market. In order to finance these deficits, however, the young and the old rely on two very different flows. The deficit amongst young people is financed almost exclusively through transfers, public and private, while that of the elderly is financed almost entirely by asset income and the value of housing services derived from owner-occupied housing. Figure 1 also highlights the impact of youth unemployment in South Africa, which delays the rise in labour income and, as a result, the transition to economic independence. The implication of this is that young people remain dependent on others – whether members of their own or other households, or the state – to finance

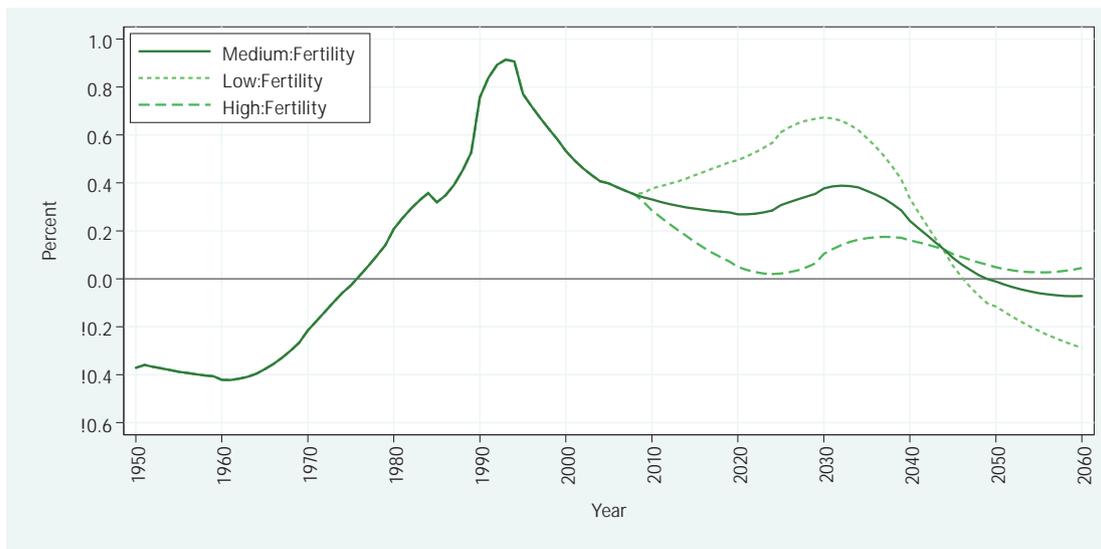
their consumption for a longer period than is the norm in other countries. An extended period of economic dependence amongst young people is an immediate concern in terms of the additional burden placed on older cohorts, directly as the source of private transfers and indirectly as the ultimate source of public transfers. Further, the negative impact of youth unemployment on future earnings means that the ability of prime working age cohorts to generate sufficient surpluses in the future may be constrained.

To calculate the demographic dividend, the two curves in the figure 1—labour income and consumption—are combined with population projections. In effect, this calculation compares the number of producers (using the labour income profile) to the number of consumers (using the consumption profile) in the future. If the number of producers

rises relative to the number of consumers the ratio rises, implying that the extent of dependence on producers is reduced. If the number of producers fall relative to the number of consumers, the ratio falls and the extent of dependence rises. This change in the ratio—positive or negative—is the first demographic dividend.

Based on NTA estimates, South Africa is currently in the middle of its period of first demographic dividend. Estimated to have started in the mid-1970s, under medium fertility assumptions (Figure 2), it is expected to end in around 35 years' time. Declining fertility has already enabled South Africa to raise investment in child health and education and this should positively impact on productivity as these children enter the labour force. However, without jobs, these gains will not be realised, irrespective of their accumulated human capital.

Figure 2: Estimates of South Africa's First Demographic Dividend, 1950-2060



Source: Own calculations, SA NTA and UN 2010 Population Prospects

Notes: The graph is interpreted as the boost to GDP per capita growth in a given year resulting from a changing population age structure.



Challenges facing South Africa

One of the key challenges for South Africa is ensuring that investments in education and health yield improvements in outcomes. Despite significant spending in these areas, the evidence suggests that this investment may fail to unlock the second dividend. The chief reason for this is the persistence of deep inequalities in the quality of service provision in the areas of education and health during the post-apartheid era.

In terms of education, the result is the existence of a bimodal distribution of schools in terms of performance (see, for example, Van der Berg 2007; Spaul 2012). Spaul (2012) notes that this bimodality "can be seen as early as Grade 3 ... and remains unabated until the national school leaving exam". Van der Berg (2007) estimates that while Africans accounted for 83% of the Grade 12 cohort in 2003, they accounted for only 71% of passes, 22% of higher grade Mathematics passes (i.e. with a 50% mark or better), and just 8% of passes with

an A-aggregate mark (average over all subjects of at least 80%). Such inequalities in education reproduce inequality in the labour market and ensuring a consistency of (high) quality across schools must be a policy priority.

Not only are a large number of schools unable to achieve satisfactory results relative to the national curriculum, South African schools also perform poorly when compared internationally: "South African schools generally perform at an even lower level than most of their African counterparts, despite greater South African resources, less acute poverty and more educated parents" (Van der Berg 2007). Again, this demonstrates some of the inequalities within the system, but also points to systemic failures within education that do not bode well in an era of globalisation, international trade and competition for foreign direct investment.

● Is a policy environment conducive to the realisation of the demographic dividend in place in South Africa?

It would seem the answer is not yet. The weakness in the labour

market and continued problems in the provision of quality education to the broader population point to the fact that South Africa will be hard pressed to fully capture the dividend as current inequalities are reproduced in younger generations. Moreover, the economy continues to grow in such a way as to reduce demand for South Africa's abundant supply of relatively unskilled labour, while skills shortages persist, with negative consequences for levels of wage inequality.

Inequalities in terms of quality of education are particularly concerning and have far-reaching consequences. As noted by the World Bank (2012), "the disadvantages conferred by unequal opportunities in education earlier in life are an increasingly consequential stumbling block to the social and economic mobility of individuals, for whom having a job is crucial". The effects of these inequalities are compounded by inequalities in the quality of health service provision and the burden of disease, as well as in access to housing, sanitation and water supplies, which all play a role in determining wellbeing.



“ South African schools generally perform at an even lower level than most of their African counterparts, despite greater South African resources, less acute poverty and more educated parents” (Van der Berg 2007). Again, this demonstrates some of the inequalities within the system, but also points to systemic failures within education that do not bode well in an era of globalisation. ”



Economic growth underpins the creation of new job opportunities in South Africa

Economic growth underpins the creation of new job opportunities in South Africa and, accordingly, the state should seek to create an environment that is more supportive of private sector growth. While the state is an important employer in its own right, fiscal constraints on public sector employment growth means that the private sector is the only realistic source of jobs going forward. In many instances, such a recommendation is interpreted in the context of taxation and labour legislation. For example, while these are certainly relevant in South Africa, interventions in terms of greater security in the supply of electricity, improvements in the transportation and logistics sectors, and the facilitation of international trade may be just as beneficial.

Growth, however, while necessary, is not a sufficient condition for greater employment. The pursuit

of a more labour-intensive growth path represents a critical shift in South Africa's economic trajectory and is fundamental to the creation of employment on the required scale. While significant gains in terms of educational attainment have been made in the past 20 years, the inability of the economy to absorb new labour market entrants in sufficient numbers represents a key limiting factor on the size of both demographic dividends.

Policy priorities for maximising the benefit from the dividend should be formulated in terms of South Africa having already transitioned through the first half of its first dividend period. In this respect, the policy priorities should arguably be to ramp up economic growth and fundamentally shift the labour intensity of production. Broad educational and health policies may suffer from long lead times, but there may be scope for targeted interventions particularly relating to post-

secondary non-university education (the FET colleges in particular), as well as artisan training and apprenticeships that would have shorter lags. Further, education and training interventions that target the large group of individuals who leave the secondary schooling system prior to completion and provide them with marketable skills are essential. In health terms, continued emphasis on prevention and treatment of diseases such as HIV/Aids and tuberculosis will help reduce the effective dependency ratio by reducing morbidity amongst working age cohorts.



“ The pursuit of a more labour-intensive growth path represents a critical shift in South Africa's economic trajectory and is fundamental to the creation of employment on the required scale. ”





“ *The successful exploitation of the first demographic dividends. The developed countries that long ago passed through their dividend phase . . . will vary in the degree to which they capitalised on these trends, and thus whether they are also likely to be the beneficiaries of the associated second dividend. Many will have squandered this opportunity.* ”

Second demographic dividend linked to rising productivity per worker

Successful implementation of these policies will benefit the country's ability to generate a second dividend. The second demographic dividend is linked to rising productivity per worker, which arises through greater investment in human, physical and financial capital. Unlike the first dividend, though, the second dividend can permanently raise growth and living standards. The move towards mandatory retirement savings is also an important policy initiative in this regard.

While the major infrastructural investments envisaged in South Africa have long lags and would boost the second dividend, they may also have significant employment and economic growth effects during construction. Some of the more systemic educational policy priorities – particularly those targeting quality improvements – would have more of an impact in terms of the second dividend, and this is true of many of the health and related interventions such as provision of housing, sanitation and water.



Pool (2007) argues that the key to maximising the second dividend is “the successful exploitation of the first demographic dividends. The developed countries that long ago passed through their dividend phase . . . will vary in the degree to which they capitalised on these trends, and thus whether they are also likely to be the beneficiaries of the associated second dividend. Many will have squandered this opportunity.” Although South Africa is halfway through its first dividend period, concerted policy action in the appropriate areas can ensure that it does not squander the remaining period of opportunity too.

The above draws on the following:

1. M. Oosthuizen. Maximising South Africa's demographic dividend. *DPRU Working Paper* No.13/157, Development Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town, October 2013.
2. M. J. Oosthuizen. The South African generational economy. *Policy in Focus* No. 30, December 2014. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, United Nations Development Programme: Brasilia, December 2014.
3. M. J. Oosthuizen. *Bonus or mirage? South Africa's demographic dividend*. Journal of the Economics of Ageing, 5(14-22), April 2015. ■



CAFFE society

An innovative youth project seeks to change the lot of young people of the Cape Flats, reports Dudley Moloj.

Situated some 30 kilometres from the City of Cape Town, Mitchells Plain was never meant to be a tourism showcase. It was meant to be a “model dormitory suburb” for housing a growing “coloured” population. These days, however, the “model dormitory suburb” of yesteryears has morphed out into a number of sprawling sections.



The tell-tale rows of houses make Mitchells Plain lean more towards a “township” rather than “suburb”. And so do the legacies of neglect that it shares in common with many a South African township.

Stoked up by rampant youth poverty, unemployment and a general dearth of opportunities, a sort of “thug-life” culture has strong appeal among the youth of the Cape Flats Township. The odds are often stacked up so unbearably high, that even the most determined young people battle to break through the glass ceiling of post-apartheid opportunities.

Youth Cafe

It is this seeming misery that the innovative Youth Cafe initiative seeks to help correct; and one of the three Youth Cafes in the Western Cape is in Mitchells Plain. The Youth Cafe is among

a dwindling number of tenants at the Rocklands Shopping Centre. A boom in the number of bigger and bigger malls in the vicinity had steadily robbed the centre of much needed shopping traffic.

Although not exactly empty, there is an atmosphere of desertion. The steel, “stop-nonsense” black burglar-barred door of the corner shop that the Youth Cafe occupies, only accentuates the feeling of unease. After all, very bad things are said to happen to good people in places like Mitchells Plain.

But once inside, all danger, real or perceived, remains outside the locked door. The contrast to the world outside the cafe’s walls is razor sharp. A first-time visitor is immediately stunned by the all-too-sudden switch from the sombre exterior to the bright coloured interior.

Along the red panelled reception area is a bunch of flowers with an inscription “hope” next to it. The word seems superfluous, as the overall atmosphere inside the cafe is the most eloquent expression of a gateway to a second shot at life.

The roomful of youngsters, is variously occupied. There are young people engrossed in the blue of computer monitors; huddled up in some obscure tasks or merely chatting with peers.

Aged between 17 and 24, most are school dropouts and come from what social workers would describe as “dysfunctional” families. The majority of them were either drug users or have been associated with gang related activities at some point. Without the benefit of visible positive role models, they lived on the borderlines of survival and delinquency.



developing OUR FUTURE

A bad story turned good

Easily misconstrued and maligned, the Youth Cafe is among few spaces in which these troubled youth are accepted for who they are, irrespective of the baggage they may be shouldering. Instead of vilifying them, the Youth Cafe uses the nasty experiences of these young people to help change their lot. Using one's bad turns in life as potential signposts to a second shot at life, seems to be the Youth Cafe's mantra.

Plain Youth Cafe on a daily basis. He had overcome the pull of gang culture and escaped entrapment in a dead-end job as an airport trolley-puller.

Against the odds, Parker worked himself to becoming a computer science lecturer and later, one of South Africa's renowned young social entrepreneurs. He is now a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and National LEAD SA Hero of 2015.

Brent Williams is a former "hard core" gang member turned exponent of the Youth Cafe model. Williams was among Parker's early recruits to Reconstructed Living Labs (RLabs), which runs the Youth Cafes initiative. While Mitchell's Plain Youth Cafe manager, Conrad Petersen tells a similar life story with fervour.

A high school dropout, Peterson once worked for a fast-food outlet. He pulled himself from deprivation and drug addiction to successfully

“The idea was to use technology to share these people's stories of hope, so other young people wouldn't go the same route [of gangsterism and drug abuse]”

Youth Cafes founder, Marlon Parker, is himself living testimony to the power of second chances. Born and bred in Bridgetown, which is part of Athlone, on the Cape Flats, Parker's life was no different to that of those young people frequenting the Mitchells

“The idea was to use technology to share these people's stories of hope, so other young people wouldn't go the same route [of gangsterism and drug abuse],” Parker told a Daily Maverick journalist.

starting and running his own companies in the restaurant and telecommunications space, but only to lose it all due to a relapse to his former lifestyle.



An early “convert” to the RLabs tenet, Peterson explains that taking the Youth Cafe concept from paper to project was a tough call.

“We literally had to build the plane while flying it,” he recalls.

It was projected that the Youth Cafe would register 50 young people monthly. But the figure was shooting up to 200 just days leading up to the official launch, in January 2014, of what was then South Africa's first Youth Cafe. The higher than expected response put the initially modest plans of the Youth Cafe into a tailspin.

Changing mind-sets

Like all else, the matter of what exactly was to be taught to new recruits also became work-in-progress. In the early days, the Youth Cafe's offering of information technology-powered were short-courses not differentiable to those occupying this niche market.

The Youth Cafe recruits “ were merely receiving a whole lot of certificates and not doing anything with them,” as Peterson bluntly puts it.

The Youth Cafe still offers courses that range from computer basics, entrepreneurship to hairdressing. However, it is the power of shared experiences through story-telling that is the project's most unique selling point.

With just over two years in existence, it is probably early days before the Youth Cafe could be said to be making any sort of impact. Yet still, it may take a while before another Marlon Parker could emerge from the sandy streets of the Cape Flats. In the meantime, Youth Cafes such as the one in Mitchells Plain represent just about the only space in which young people could confront their personal traumas or share triumphs in order to spark a desire for change.

“All they need is a little bit of hope to see that there is a way out of [the difficulties they face],” Peterson concludes. ■



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HOW *youth* CAFES OPERATE

The Youth Cafe concept is the brain-child of Marlon Parker, a now acclaimed social entrepreneur from the Cape Flats, in the Western Cape Province. Though Parker dreamt up the idea of a Cafe that would contribute to youth empowerment as early as 2010, the first ever Youth Cafe only came to life in 2014 with the launch of the first Youth Cafe in Mitchells Plain (Rocklands).

Currently, there is a total of three Youth Cafes in the Western Cape Province. Two of these are situated on the Cape Flats. The third one is in George, over 400 kilometres from the city of Cape Town.

Social capital

Youth Cafes differ from their "normal" counterparts in that they trade in social capital, instead of cash. The exchange for goods and services that Youth Cafes use is a virtual currency called ZLatos. Newly registered Youth Cafe members are issued 100 ZLatos on joining the Cafe. Thereafter, they are expected to earn more ZLatos by attending personal development courses and doing community work.

While the courses and everything else is technically provided for free, the idea of a virtual currency gives a sense of having "earned your keep" among the young participants. The ZLatos "wage" not only provides incentives for young people to take up the courses that the Youth Cafe offers, it also helps side-step potential stigma that is often associated with any form of charity.

Earning one's ZLatos is meant to change the mind-sets of young people from "asking what Government is doing" to "what you can do to empower yourself," according to Peterson.

The ZLatos virtual currency can be used to pay for courses, buy meals, beverages (non-alcoholic), airtime or pay for goods and services from participating providers and merchants. ZLatos holders, for example, could buy items from selected Spar and Shoprite outlets, as well as use the virtual currency to pay for doctors' fees at discounted rates.

what can you do to
empower
yourself



touching LIVES?

As the Youth Cafe approaches its second anniversary, it may be early days for its impact to be truly entrenched among the young people of the Cape Flats. Nonetheless, the initiative appears to be touching lives, judging by the traffic of young people to its doors.

The Reconstructed Living Labs (RLabs) and its Youth Cafes initiative have inspired the Youth Development Strategy of the Western Cape Provincial Government, which funds the operations of the Cafes. This particular development raised the hope of a further up-scaling the Youth Cafe concept across that province and possibly sparking similar projects countrywide.

Also worth noting is the fact that the out-of-box thinking Youth Cafe initiative had since grown wings and taken root in other countries. According to a Wikipedia citation, modified forms of the Youth Cafe idea have cropped up in as many as 21 countries, including Brazil, Namibia, Tanzania, Nigeria and Somalia. ■



Is the Public Service Youth-friendly?

The DPSA recently completed the "Study on the Decline of Youth Intake in the Public Service" and this article by Fanani Manugu takes us through the substantive issues.



According to the National Youth Policy 2009–2014, a staggering 3.1 million young people aged 15-34 years are currently unemployed in South Africa. The figure means that 72% of the total unemployed population is made up of young people, which naturally pushes the issue of youth development high up on the list of Government priorities.

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, Government has been acutely aware of the ticking time bomb that is youth unemployment. It remains keenly attuned to potential loss of opportunities that could arise from the under-development of youth.

Over the past twenty-one years, the legislative and institutional basis for tackling youth unemployment head-on was firmly put in place. Most important, there is a demonstrable resolve on the part of Government to "walk the talk" by creating

employment opportunities for youth in the Public Service. Yet, even as the Public Service leads in efforts to push back the tide of youth employment, there are worrying cracks that are beginning to appear.

Between September 2014 and March 2015, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) undertook a Study on the Decline of Youth Intake in the Public Service. The study covered the years 2011 to 2013. In the process, 100 young public servants from national and provincial departments were randomly selected for interviews. Twenty three national and nine provincial departments and civil society groupings participated in focus group sessions.

The purpose of the study was to ascertain why the Public Service is not attracting more young people among its ranks. It also sought to

find an explanation behind the high turnover rate of young people in the Public Service.

Downward trend

As expected, the responses to these inter-linked questions were not positive. The Annual Report on Employment Equity (EE) in the Public Service 2012/2013 had already reflected a decline in the intake of youth since 2011. The 2012/13 EE report, which was part of a trove of documents that informed the study, indicated that the total number of young people employed in the Public Service declined by 4 469 people between 2011 and 2012, or from 397 451 and 392 982 in the respective years. Furthermore, the number of young people in the employ of the Public Service figure substantially dropped by 14 315 in 2013 (or from the 392 982 in 2012 to 378 667).



On the recruitment side, the study noted that Public Service employment grew from 1 302 101 to 1 331 154 during the same three years that are covered by the study, yet without corresponding increase in the uptake of young public servants. The study could not explain the decline in the numbers of young public servants in terms of the number of young public servants who reached the age of 35 and therefore exited the youth category.

What is puzzling is why young people would leave seemingly stable employment in the Public Service, given South Africa's high level of youth unemployment. Do young public servants jump the ship for other jobs? Or are they

swelling the ranks of the already high number of unemployed youth? The answers to these questions are better explained by the qualitative elements of the study. The proffered causes range from government red tape to negative public image, which both create barriers to entry. While the push factors (which drive young public servants out of the system) include pervasive rank consciousness, bureaucratic inflexibilities, lack of training opportunities and thus curtailed career development and prospects for promotion.

Appealing to youth

To attract qualified staff, organisations are increasingly adopting proactive, creative

recruitment techniques. Contemporary trends in the recruitment discourse shows that the focus is now not only about hiring, but also includes creating an environment that will keep newly recruited employees satisfied (retention) and less inclined to leave soon after appointment. Recruitment of staff, particularly talented staff, is a costly business which now compels employers to continuously seek to understand the motivating and discouraging forces that affect their work force.

To this end, the DPSA has developed norms, standards, policies and guides to inform recruitment and retention processes in the Public Service. Specific to youth development, there are other policies of Government which aims to increase youth employment. These are, among others, learnerships, internships facilitated by the DPSA and youth brigades as facilitated by the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA).

Despite all these initiatives, the recruitment and retention of youth in the Public Service is still not satisfactory. Young people complain about the recruitment criteria, such as years of experience, which is a barrier for them. Policies such as open competition are perceived as barriers to succession planning and not enough is done to ensure training and development for the youth. All these issues are perceived by the youth as factors that hinder opportunities for upward mobility.

“ Do young public servants jump the ship for other jobs? Or are they swelling the ranks of the already high number of unemployed youth? ”





An Information Guide on Managing Retention in the Public Service was developed in 2006. The guide provides guidance to government departments on how departments could retain staff in general. The guide also focuses on attracting employees to join an organisation through focussed recruitment strategies while keeping those who are already employed, especially those whose skills are crucial to the organisation.

However, the nearly ten-year old guide document has not been reviewed for alignment with current circumstances and priorities of Government. In addition, the guide is generic and does not target youth as a group that must be robustly recruited and retained. It does, however, mention the fact that employees recruited are young. Of concern is that the guide is not used to its maximum to achieve results desired in the Public Service as highlighted through the study when participants stressed that the DPSA needs to develop a retention strategy for the Public Service. This makes the review of the current guide significant for responsive intervention.



What ought to be done?

During the qualitative sessions of the study, participants provided a range of pointers on how the Public Service could reverse the downward trend in the employment and retention of young people. Some of the recommendations are noted below:

Review of recruitment strategy

The Public Service reviews the current recruitment strategy. Such strategy, along with the relevant policies, ought to reasonably accommodate youth entering the workplace by not requiring far-fetched number of years of experience, which is often a huge barrier to entry into the Public Service.

Review of decentralised recruitment

The current recruitment in the Public Service is decentralised. Since departments use different recruitment criteria and or diverse requirements for similar posts, the decentralisation of recruitment seems to perpetuate inconsistencies encountered in government departments across the system.

Good practice

The DPSA, through its knowledge management pillar, works closely with the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) and the Government Communication Information System (GCIS) in developing a Public Service Marketing Strategy. Such a strategy would help communicate good cases for learning across the Public Service.

21st Century workplaces

The Public Service ought to be attuned to the changing nature of work in the 21st Century, which aligns closely with young people's thinking and general outlook. Through some form of Public-Private-Partnerships, government could pick up a thing or two on the ever-changing realities of the contemporary workplace of which the Public Service is part.

Health and wellness

The health and wellness programme of the Public Service should be reviewed to reasonably accommodate youth through youth focused educational life-orientation programmes. These ought to be tailored in such a manner that they reflect the lived-experiences of young people.

The wide ranging recommendations that arose from the study require serious consideration across the Public Service. If followed up, they could greatly contribute to the effective attainment of Government's goal of tackling youth unemployment and development head-on. In particular, the issue of recruitment and retention of young public servants has huge ramification for the future of the Public Service, given the aging nature of the majority of public servants ■



Learning to serve, serving to learn

Service learning takes students to the outside classroom where they share their skills and learn from communities at the same time. But the bigger ambition is to transform teaching and learning at universities,

writes Veerle Dieltiens



When students step out of their classrooms, onto a bus and drive out of the university gates to meet with the outside world, they bring with them some skills but they have gaps in their knowledge too. They are not yet fully certified professionals. So while they can provide a few services, they also have much to learn.

So service learning tries to kill two birds with one stone. It pledges to provide services to communities while teaching students how to communicate, to deal empathetically with people and to put to practice, the theory of the classroom. More importantly, service learning gives students direct experience of the socio-economic ills that

confront South Africans daily and hit the poor hardest. Faced with their own privilege in the light of disadvantage, students have to answer their own conscious (and sometimes the questions of a lecturer) on what their responsibilities are to those they serve and to the South African community at large. It is a chance to introspect and more than a workplace experience. Rev Billyboy Ramahlele, Director: Community Engagement at the University of the Free State explains that: "Our agenda is Public Service. If people sit in public offices but without the consciousness that they are there to serve, we think that universities must be at the forefront of inculcating that spirit and making sure that our graduates do not just

walk out of graduation halls with papers only but with consciousness and ability to serve."

Service comes in many forms: tutoring in schools; writing up peoples' wills; designing a hand-pump for a food garden; conducting a needs-survey; manufacturing a ball for a tiger in the zoo or a hammock for a lion (communities can also be non-human).

Service learning is not only about the good it could do for students and communities, but is also part of transforming universities. Universities should not only be the bastions of elite theory and abstract thought, of mathematics and philosophy, it should also teach



students the importance of living a good life, the importance of values, and the responsibilities we have to friends and strangers.



Rev Billyboy Ramahlele explains that what makes community engagement different

to the teaching and research universities are used to, is that it is meant to extend into a partnership with communities. Academics cannot simply do research 'on' or 'in' a community; neither can they teach 'about' a community. Service learning turns the objects of teaching or research into subjects. Community members become involved in determining the topic of research and its protocols.

But for many faculties that is quite a departure from the academic content that they are used to dispensing. Soft skills do not exactly seem to be the function of universities. Also academics do not always share the same vision of what universities ought to do, or of what values they should teach, or of "what community" means. The community that underpins service learning is not everyone's cup of tea. Sometimes it is like convincing a staunch capitalist that Marx was right after all.



Service learning is also a lot more expensive than gathering everyone together in a lecture

hall. There is transport costs, administration and taking the time to find a location for students to be

in and then to carefully negotiate the terms of entry with communities.

In addition, the risk is that students who are only on route to becoming professionals, act unprofessionally, dispense the wrong advice or say or do inappropriate things. There is danger that service learning becomes patronising or hardens stereotypes of poor people.



Moreover, not all degrees seem suited to service learning.

Medicine, law, education and

engineering can all contribute directly and immediately to communities in need of care, access to legal service, tutoring of children or building a bridge. But what are we to do with the philosophers? For service learning to rise up above charity or simply giving of time, students need to be productively engaged and it has to contribute to their course work. Otherwise it is contrived and has no logical fit. But then, is service learning only for those who have already chosen careers in services? Will it be something that by its serving nature is what women mainly do?

For these reasons, service learning has ebbed and flowed over the years. Money once floated service learning through a project called Community Higher Education Service Partnerships (CHESP) and there were several experiments across different universities and different faculties. Since CHESP was phased out, it has been up to universities and to individual champions within those universities





“ The situation in the country is so desperate that we really need to prepare our students to go out there and connect meaningfully ”

to keep the idea alive. At one or two universities it is the mainstream, but for most, service learning is very much decentralised and it is only because of the dogged determination of individual lecturers that it continues.



For advocates of service learning, the challenges can be met with a little creative thinking.

Universities are, after all, at the cutting edge of finding solutions. If lecturers themselves are trained on the methodology of service learning, they are usually won over. If students are constantly challenged to reflect on their experiences, then stereotypes are not likely to be perpetuated. If every student at every university spent just a little bit of time in service, the impact could be really big and really positive.

Moreover, as long as universities have to adhere to the policy in White Paper 3 that community

engagement becomes a central pillar of what they do – along with teaching and research – there is an added incentive to make service learning part of the mainstream. Prof Mabel Erasmus, explains that: “the situation in the country is so desperate that we really need to prepare our students to go out there and connect meaningfully. It seems unethical to me, not to at least try to give our students

the tools to go through learning experiences. I think transformative learning is so powerful, because when you come across something unfamiliar which does not fit with how you see the world, you begin to enquire about it instead of withdrawing, you undergo the experience and add that sense of transformation to our lives.”





Veerle Dieltiens follows a group of first year student nurses as they do a stint of service learning in Springfontein.



THE SERVICE LEARNING ROUTE TO GOOD HEALTH

The impact of the past, is evident in the destitution visible in Springfontien. The local tourist attraction is a graveyard where over 700 mostly women and children lie buried – victims of a British concentration camp of the South African War. Their terrible death from hunger and typhoid was finally documented when Emily Hobhouse visited Springfontein in 1901. She was a British peace activist and welfare campaigner whose investigations of conditions in the concentration camps pricked the conscious of an imperial power.

The ghosts that haunt the 115-year old graveyard do not seem to have left Springfontein. Malnutrition still

grips its bony fingers of the children in the settlement.

Now a new group of nursing students is following in Hobhouse's footsteps. They are applying their textbook knowledge in a community setting and at the same time, learning what it means to be activist foot-soldiers in the battleground against illnesses.

The students arrive in Springfontein's dusty township in two buses from their far-off Bloemfontein campus. The cool wind of the southern Free State is a brief respite.

There is an undercurrent warning of a hot September day to come. The students collect together in groups of three and fan out in different directions dissipating across the settlement of Reconstruction and Development (RDP) houses, infiltrating every arterial road like a vaccine. They have been here every Wednesday for five weeks. The families to whom they are allocated are expecting them and doors open at the first knock.

Seventy-eight year old gogo greets her three student nurses timidly. Her daughter has gone to the shop so they wait a while, setting up the medicines and equipment. Last week, they had picked up compacted wax in the old women's



ear and they have brought with them sweet oil remedy. When gogo's daughter arrives, the nursing students hand her a set of instructions they have put together themselves and demonstrate how the medicine works.

The nurses know their way around the house. They fill up a kettle and pour warm water into a basin to which they add coarse salt. Gently, gogo's swollen feet are lifted into the basin and rubbed and massaged and then ever so carefully dried. It has had an effect and the swelling visibly goes down.

In class, the nurses had washed each other's feet, letting go of any squeamishness with rubbing a strangers' toes. They have also washed each other's hair, crossing ethnic barriers and also learning about hair products on the other side of the shopping aisle.

It is the tactile induction into touch that is training them to be nurses. But it is being witness to the socio-

economic problems that plague the health of a community that is training them to be activist nurses.

Gogo does not speak much. Her hands gently shake but there is a tight grip as the students bid farewell. They are off to the school to meet up with gogo's grandson. They want to check up on some sores on his head and body.

On the road back to the school, they pass by households where they have a glimpse of their colleagues. Many are playing with children using games that they have designed themselves. Sitting on the steps of one house, a student has her nose pinched with a clothes peg by a little girl delighting in the tomfoolery. Her mother laughs in the doorway. It is a picture perfect frame of three-way learning.

Scattered all around the township's rigid grid-like map, are pin-points of health and education inter-

changed. Three of the students pick up on a boy with a severe ear infection and walk him over to the clinic. Another group collects tyres at the dump-site with the university's bus and builds a protective wall around a family's vegetable garden.

Around the corner, coke bottles have been fashioned into plant holders, filled with the township's dust, layered with some compost and strung up onto a fence for a hanging veggie garden. In the next street, there is a mud rondavel reinforced with glass bottles that the Occupational Therapy students left as part of their Shack Replacement project.

It has not been all one-way learning. The students have gained skills which one student lists as: "negotiation, communication, reciprocity, respect." A lecturer notes the difference it has made to student relationships: "We don't need to be talking 'transformation' – it comes automatically amongst our

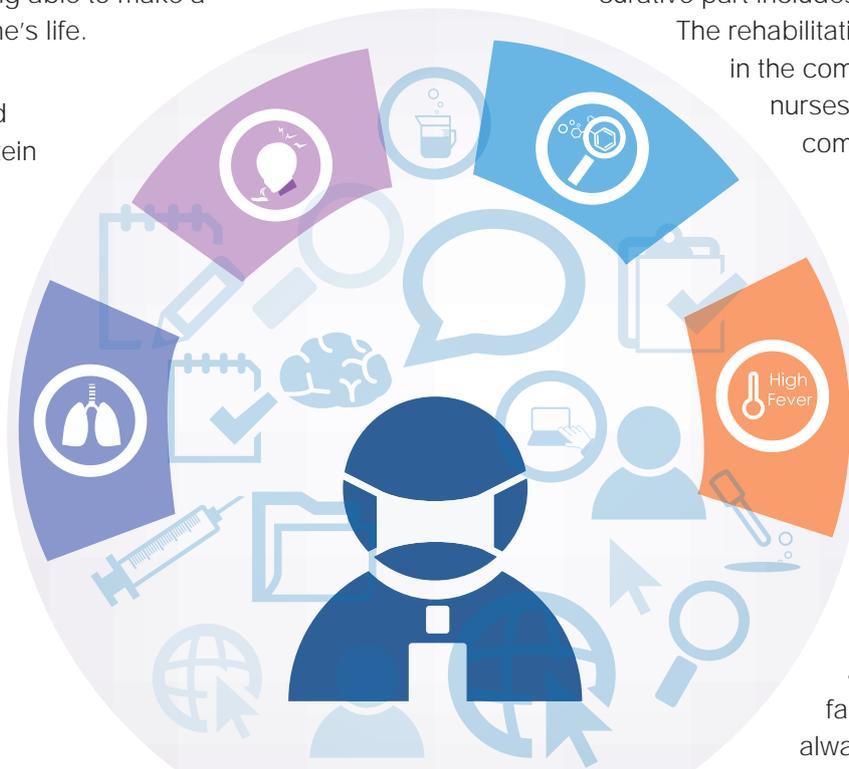




students because we say to them: 'in service learning you need each other'. This one has prior knowledge, this one knows the culture and the language."

The students no longer think of nurses as the white-uniformed specimens seen in hospitals. They are dressed in blue and carry an assortment of tools, including garden rakes and medicine kits. They have come to appreciate the preventative measures of primary health care and there is the wonderful sense of satisfaction in being able to make a difference to someone's life.

The university started coming to Springfontein last year but this practical aspect of community nursing is a 25-year old established tradition. Dr Marissa Wilke explains that while the aim of these weekly visits is to provide the students with practical experience, she also hopes that "having a



The four-year nursing curriculum is designed to "follow the patient". In the first year, they start in the family, in the next year they move to the clinic and finally end-up specialising at the hospital.

Says one lecturer: "we want them to understand the patient as an individual before that person becomes a patient. Also we are focusing on primary health care – promoting and preventing – which talks about the situation before an illness sets in. Then the curative part includes clinics and hospitals.

The rehabilitative part goes back in the community. For us as nurses, community means community."

This is the last visit of the year to Springfontein for the nursing students. Weeks ago they had arrived here not sure of what they would be doing or whether they would be welcomed and anxious about toilet facilities. It has not always been plain sailing.

“ We want them to understand the patient as an individual before that person becomes a patient.”

slightly more rural experience will entice some of the students to go back and be part of a health team there. That is where our biggest needs for health care workers are."

Not everyone welcomed the nurses into their homes. A few of the students resented giving up spare study time. But today, there is a celebratory air. Connections have been made and they leave behind a

small legacy – just as Emily Hobhouse did, over 100 years before. ■



Towards A Learning Public Service

In March 2015, the Policy and Research Analysis branch in the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) hosted the annual Batho Pele Learning Network, in partnership with the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME).

With over 300 Human Resources Management (HRM) practitioners from across the Public Service in attendance, the Batho Pele Learning Network was indeed a platform for learning and the sharing of good practice in public administration. In particular, the 2015 edition of the learning network focused on the Management

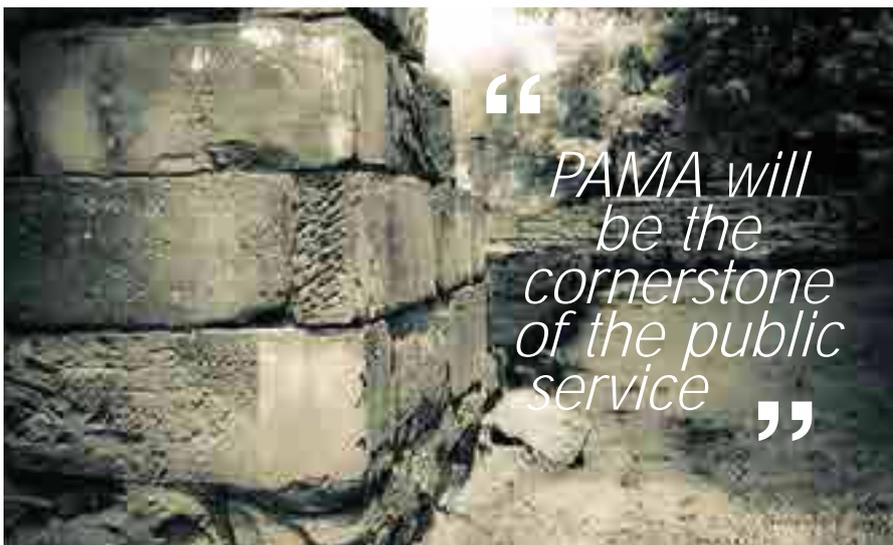
Performance Assessment Tool's (MPAT) on KPA3, which assesses Human Resources Management (HRM) in the Public Service. The Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) administers the MPAT in order to ascertain the performance by departments annually.

A significant part of the learning network's two-day-long programme was not so much to find faults in the service delivery machinery of Government, but instead served as a workshop in which the best performing departments (according to MPAT assessments) share with their counterparts

what works. In other words, the learning network sought to create remedial opportunities for 82% of the departments that did not meet the legal requirements as per the 2013/14 MPAT report. The delegates were divided into commissions that were linked to case studies on recruitment and retention; organisational design and disciplinary case management.

"The idea is for the underperforming departments to learn from those who obtained level 4 in terms of MPAT ratings through sharing case studies on best practices," Lawrence Tsipane, Director of Learning and Knowledge Management at the DPSA, explained.

Apart from wrestling with operational level challenges, the learning network also tackled broader policy matters, such as, how these impact on the day-to-day work of public servants. The Deputy-Director General (DDG) who heads the Policy, Research and Analysis branch at the DPSA, Colette Clark, emphasised the importance of Knowledge Management (KM) in the context of the dynamism of continuous



reforms in how services are delivered.

The DDG referred to the Public Administration Management Act (PAMA) that came into effect in late December 2014, as one of the latest pieces of law that would have a huge bearing on the nature and form of the Public Service for many years to come.

“PAMA will be the cornerstone of the Public Service,” she told delegates.”

According to the DDG, the review of current norms and standards for the Public Service and the setting up of new ones is one of the key requirements of PAMA. The DDG therefore foresees Communities of Practices (CoPs) playing the significant role of gathering experts who would help in determining the

baseline norms and standards as important parts of regulations. The DDG also highlighted the following as key to the Learning Network:

- Evidence-based planning and practices to influence Policy Implementation and Review of Regulatory and Compliance Standards set for Public Administration in terms of PAMA
- Improved Integrated Planning, Operations and Performance Management Systems, as well as Productivity Measurement Systems

- Performance Measures are backward looking and do not assist us in predicting future performance- information is static but knowledge is dynamic
- The Service Delivery process of linking inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes is different for different departments, based on their chosen management practices.■

The next pages on the learning network section reproduce two of the case studies that were shared with delegates.

“

The idea is for the underperforming departments to learn from those who obtained level 4 in terms of MPAT ratings through sharing case studies on best practices.”





A Return

on Human Capital

Best Practices of the Department of Trade and Industry Republic of South Africa: Human Resource and System Management.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has obtained the highest score in the Key Performance Area (KPA) 'Human Resource and System Management,' according to the Self-Assessment Module of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT). Three to four years ago, the DTI had a vacancy rate of 25,2 %, meaning that the Department was understaffed, lacked specific specialists and hence did not function efficiently. The Human Resource Business Unit was often 'pushed to the corner' and underestimated in the organisation. In the following years, the HR Unit played a key role in solving the main challenge of the vacancy

“ Training is an essential process in career development. Considering that most of the employees belong to the younger generation, growth possibilities are of fundamental importance. ”

rate of the Department. Nowadays, the vacancy rate is at 7.4%, and it continues to drop. Other problematic areas, such as the high rate of employee turnover and diversity issues, have also been tackled.

The process to improve the performance of the DTI and to tackle the numerous problems concerning human capital, started by staffing the Human Resource Business Unit with competent employees, who have a vision and could bring positive changes to the functioning of the Department.

Success Factors

Client-oriented approach

A fundamental factor that contributed to the success of Human Resources (HR) services is the client-oriented approach. The HR managers see themselves as service providers whose goal is to make their clients, that is, the employees of the DTI, happy. Therefore, client satisfaction is of key importance. For instance, staff members fill in customer service surveys regarding the satisfaction level of HR services in different areas. Through an internal assessment, it was found that the

Human Resource Business Unit was the most improved area in the Group Systems and Support Services Division (GSSSD)¹.

Clearly Defined HR Value Chain

Looking back at the process, building up the 'value chain' of HR was of fundamental importance. The establishment of the value chain process was instrumental in the change process. What follows are a few main elements in the value chain process: (1) the understanding of what staff is required in terms of skills and

¹ The baseline was conducted in 2009 and follow-up was conducted in 2001

knowledge before the recruitment process begins, (2) clarity regarding the organisational design in terms of what staff is required in terms of structure, (3) the procedure concerning recruitment and selection, (4) the simplification of performance contracts, (5) the assistance of staff in developing their skills and therefore enhancing performance, (6) performance management and (7) labour relations. Alongside these elements, there are sub-elements, such as HR operations that regulate appointments and benefits. This overview of the value chain process helped to obtain a clear picture regarding the DTI and its capacity.

Risk Management

The importance of the factor of risk management was also stressed by DTI HR. This basically refers to anticipating and addressing blockages or impediments to achieve desired results.

Support within the Organisation

The support provided by the DTI Minister, the Deputy Ministers, the Director General and Deputy Directors General is very important for continuous improvement and progress. Prior to the

turnaround, the work of HR was 'pushed to the corner'. Therefore, leadership and support provided by the political heads and higher-level civil servants is a necessary component for the compliance of and respect for HR work and services.

Sharing the Success Stories

The importance of continuity in the learning process was emphasised by HR, and furthermore stressed that 'sharing' is essential. In this respect communication is vital, because only by sitting together can issues be effectively discussed and resolved. Therefore, at the DTI, team meetings are held on a monthly basis. Sharing best practices is useful and important. The DTI shared their experiences regarding lowering the vacancy rate with the the Department of Public Service and Administration. Additionally, the DTI is keen to learn and to exchange ideas with the private sector, specifically concerning designing policies and strategies. The Department is a member of the Corporate Leadership Council, (that is, an international organisation specialising in HR matters), which draws on practices from private sector organisations, especially in terms of policies.

Outcomes: New Policies in Programmes in Place

To implement the improved strategy in the field of HR, the DTI managers made significant changes in the areas of: (1) the recruitment policy, (2) the retention policy by improving



“*The organisation also strives to implement equity targets to ensure that race and gender are represented at the Department, according to the Economically Active Population (EAP) statistics.*”

working conditions, (3) the performance management policy, (4) the training of employees and (5) the employment equity policy.

Recruitment and Selection Process

Although the problem of staff shortages was substantially reduced, the high vacancy rate still remains a problem that requires an effective ongoing process of improvement. Currently the DTI has an established staff of 1 340, with most posts being filled; the current post vacancy is below 100. The recruitment process is a key success factor in addressing this issue. Due to the outsourcing of recruitment and lengthy procedures of selection and acceptance of new candidates, the vacancy rate used to be high. To tackle this problem, recruiting is now done in-house and new guidelines and procedures with timeframes were put in place. The DTI adopted with a maximum period of two months for filling a vacant post from the date of advertising to the date of offer.

Not filling up a post within this timeframe has consequences, such as, the abolition of the post, which means that the recruitment process has to start all over again. This approach is summarised as ‘use it or lose it’, and HR has asserted that this approach does work. It communicates a message,

and hence results are being achieved. In order to make the recruitment process more efficient, an e-recruitment system was introduced. Also, the Department has its own vetting unit to fast-track the process, however, the screening is outsourced to an external service provider.

Most important, the DTI HR unit is treated as a strategic partner of the Department. It is standard practice for aspects related to recruitment to feature on the agendas of both Executive Committee (EXCO) and Management Committee (MANCO) meetings at DTI.

Retention Policy: How to Make People Stay

One of the key problems at the DTI used to be the retention of employees. For instance, during the financial year 2008/9, the turnover rate of employees was 11.9%. Since then it has been steadily decreasing and according to the data for 2011 it had dropped to 9.9%. More than half of the terminations were due to resignations. According to exit interviews conducted in 2011, the reasons for resignations vary. The employees who left the DTI were mostly young people in the age group 18-29 (generation Y) and the age group 30-44 (generation X). Specifically generation Y employees tend to search for better

career opportunities and often leave a department after two years of employment. This contributes to a high turnover rate. Sometimes, the management style and working environment were indicated as reasons for termination.

The Talent and Performance Management Directorate has developed an Employee Retention Policy. This includes templates for an Employee Retention Plan, a Divisional Retention Plan and a Divisional Retention Information Plan. The purpose of the Employee Retention Policy is to assist line-managers in retaining staff, particularly with regard to those who have scarce, critical and valuable skills, for example, statisticians and econometricians. Specific programmes were developed to attract valuable specialists and create the conditions for them to continue working at the DTI.

Quality of Work – Life programme: ‘Taking care of our people makes them take care of us’

As a part of keeping employees at the DTI, the HR department introduced a few programmes which aim to improve the quality of life of employees and their families. This involves on-site counselling, an occupational health practitioner

on duty and a locum doctor who comes in on a regular basis. Also flexible working hours were introduced to cater for the needs of employees. Understanding the needs of people makes the working place more comfortable and at the same time brings better results to the employer.

The Third Quarter Cumulative Report of 2011 on Talents and Performance Management supports the general picture of improvements drawn by the HR managers. The report indicates that 'generally speaking, employees rated the DTI as a good place to work in, with this percentage steadily increasing.

Training and Developing of Employees

Training is an essential process in career development. Considering

that most of the employees belong to the younger generation, growth possibilities are of fundamental importance.

The Department adopted a 'growing their own trees approach', which means developing one's own people by offering training and bursaries. To help people in obtaining the necessary qualifications and degrees, various programmes were set up.

The Internship Programme is another example of assisting the younger generation to become DTI employees, as this programme provides an opportunity to gain experience during a pre-employment stage.

Another programme entails the coaching of current DTI employees in such a way that they will be able to fill the positions of older staff

who will be retiring within the next ten years. This is referred to as succession planning. They see this as a method to ensure that when certain older employees leave the Department, other staff members have learned the required skills to replace them.

The Equity and Diversity Programme

The organisation also strives to implement equity targets to ensure that race and gender are represented at the Department, according to the Economically Active Population (EAP) statistics. The Public Service requires 50% female representation in management positions. To achieve this goal, positive discrimination measures are being used during the recruitment process. The DTI has introduced diversity training for



“ *The Department adopted a 'growing their own trees approach', which means developing one's own people by offering training and bursaries.* ”

all levels of employees in order to learn and to create an atmosphere of sensitivity. Each division has a diversity (employment equity) representative, whose role is to identify and to resolve problematic issues at the workplace. The target is to have 2% of personnel with disabilities at the Department. The DTI has exceeded this target by 0.5%. The emphasis is not on getting the numbers or targets right, but it is about getting competent people on board.

Philosophy of Continuous Improvement

According to the DTI HR, the work in the direction of improvement is far from being completed. Improvement is a continuous process. The philosophy of

continuous improvement adopted by the organisation helps to stimulate further progress. The result and solution-oriented approach is based on developing a list of deliverables in the form of an action plan containing quarterly milestones which have to be completed in achieving certain objectives.

Conclusion

The best practices extracted from this case story can be categorised in two groups. The first group contains best practices that can be labelled 'fundamentals'. Fundamentals indicate the global shift in vision that was directed at the stimulation of changes.

The fundamentals include the acquisition of a common vision, the establishment of realistic targets and plans, and the possession of a sense of ownership by the managers. In the DTI case, the client-oriented approach became a stepping-stone in deciding upon their targets and deliverables. The second category of best practices are the specific programmes. These include various programmes, among which are the effective and transparent recruitment policy, the quality of work – life programme, the equity and diversity programmes. ■





Sustaining the 'Who' behind Scientific Breakthroughs

How The Department of Science and Technology (DST) Makes People Matter¹

The case study for DST illustrates the way in which the Department recognises that people are behind every one of its scientific breakthroughs and how it has taken concrete steps to prioritise and support these people.

The Department makes people matter in four key ways. It has (1) streamlined its recruitment and selection processes to be fast and effective at finding the right person for the right job; (2) put in place a robust performance management system, which all levels of the Department have

¹ This case study was written for the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) by Ms Bridget Steffen, with the support of Mr Salim Latib, from the Wits Graduate School of Public and Development Management (www.wits.ac.za/Academic/CLM/PDM/).

“ People are the driving force who make or break the culture of an organisation ”

taken ownership of implementing; (3) ensuring strong staff mentoring and development opportunities, combined with a culture of trust in people's ability to do their jobs. Finally, (4) they maintain an engaged, communicative leadership which makes its decisions based on an informed understanding of what people are doing across the Department.

The Human Resources Sub-programme “aims to be a strategic partner that helps the Department to achieve its strategic and

operational activities by providing consistent and best employment practices, attracting and retaining employees, championing change and transition, setting and managing performance standards, and promoting a career-development environment in which all employees can reach their potential and contribute to a culture of service excellence.”

Making people matter cultivates excellence

Driven by its wish to use the benefits of science and technology to create a prosperous, equitable society, leadership within the Department of Science and Technology is serious about its people. This is because they recognise that “people are the driving force who make or break the culture of an organisation,” which impacts on performance.

Figure 1: Creating a culture of excellence

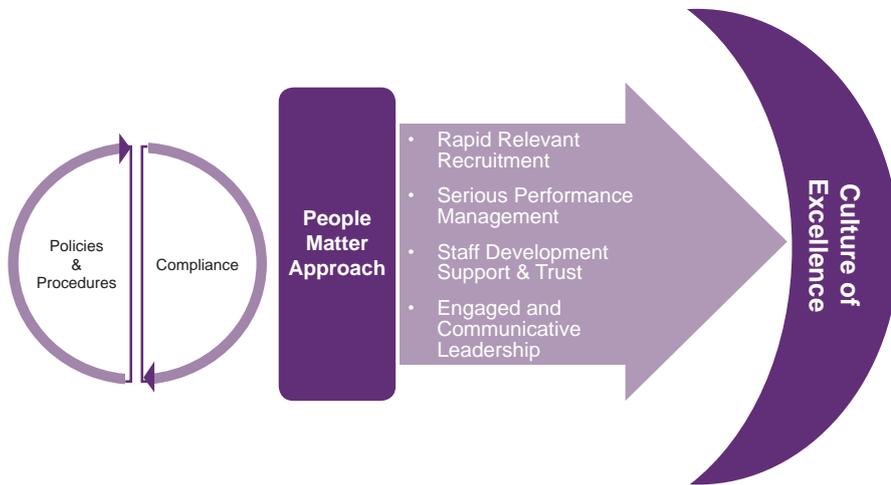


Figure 1 illustrates how the Department has managed to develop a culture of performance in the management of human resources (HR) by going beyond an approach of minimum compliance to established government-wide HR policies and procedures. Centrally, there is a focus on the people who drive the Department forward, which is carried out through four strength areas:

- The DST has developed rapid, relevant recruitment
- A strong, coherent performance management system
- Diverse staff development opportunities and support
- A fully-engaged leadership that makes informed decisions based on consultation and information-sharing

Building foundations to last: recruiting the right person, right now

The DST has a very low turnover rate of 7.6% and it takes an average of 67 days to fill a position,

something a newly-recruited employee said he had “never seen in 15 years of working in government.”

The HR unit strives above the bar in its recruitment. The unit has a long-term planning cycle that looks several years ahead to ensure that it plans ahead in a terrain where skills are scarce. For example, HR had recently begun targeting universities’ career counselling services to make students aware of the kinds of opportunities that are available in science and technology.

When DST identifies the need to fill or create a new position, the HR unit pre-empts the difficulties inherent in identifying specialist skilled staff by targeting advertising beyond the conventional vacancy pages of newspapers. This prevents lost time by having to re-advertise for scarce skills positions and ensures the information reaches a wide range of potential candidates. Rapid turn-around time is achieved by a combination

of using online systems where possible, and an HR unit which is highly supportive but also stringent, having established a culture of total adherence to HR deadlines. Candidates upload their CVs online; HR filters all relevant applications and then the manager of the position being advertised shortlists online. Interviews take place immediately followed by a recruitment report and informing of candidates. The interactions between HR and managers are characterised by clarity on manager’s recruitment needs, frequent communication, managers being supported and held to clearly defined, tight deadlines by HR and rapid follow-up of the whole process is carried out by a dedicated HR team. Summed up in the words of one HR employee, “People are our business; our business is people.”

The recruitment process is managed by way of a strict project plan indicating timelines and responsibilities of all stakeholders, including the State Security Agency (SSA) vetting process. SSA has opened their system for the Department to apply it themselves. The Department has an arrangement with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) that assist in shortening the turnaround time.

Delegations are important and in this Department delegations for filling of Senior Management Service (SMS) is held by the Head of Department (HOD) and the Minister. All other posts can be

filled on the authority of the Head of HRM. HR participates in Executive Committee (EXCO) to quickly bring HR issues to the attention of the executive.

Developing people builds support and trust

Training and support is a key focus of the Department, which prides itself as being a learning organisation. Employees leaving the DST “indicated that they were given ample opportunities for training and development. They appreciated the level of commitment that the Department put into developing them.”²

Human Resources has established various initiatives to promote personal development and support across the Department, including a mentorship programme, for which mentors are fully trained; an Executive Development Programme for SMS members; a well-established internship programme and bursary support for employees to study towards their Masters and Doctoral degrees.

The HR team has also entrenched a proactive approach to building visibility for HR issues by empowering employees to understand the ways in which HR impacts on their work. They do this by organising regular workshops and refreshers for individual programmes, units or management levels in all areas of performance management and HR. This has included training Senior Management Service members in the use of Performance

Standards Interpretation, and how the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) works.

Engaged leadership cultivates a common vision

The sustained focus on people within the Department is driven by an engaged leadership. Top-down support is required to elevate HR issues - particularly Performance Management and Development - to be recognised as highly important in the implementation of everybody's work. This support is required to ensure that the HR unit's mandate is taken seriously in its interactions with all programmes, such as full attendance at HR workshops and full policy compliance to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all staff in the workplace.

Leadership at the DST prioritises HR issues at the highest level. Managers and Directors are actively engaged in HR issues before they reach the senior decision structures of the Department, for example, with the Department's Employment Equity Plan and Policy, which drives interventions to promote equal opportunities for all races and designated groups in the Department.

A HR official explains: “You need buy-in from top management [for HR issues], which we have. We go to the Deputy Director Generals (DDGs) just before each EXCO with the vacancy rates, and the new Employment Equity Plan. We explain the status of female Senior Management Service, that we

need to push it up to 50%, or the status of disability. So we already have the buy-in and they have a clear understanding, before it is discussed at EXCO. And this makes management able to take informed decisions.”

Human Resources is required to present quarterly to the Executive Committee (EXCO) and Operations Committee (OPCO) meetings on vacancy and turnover rates as well as its exit reports which provide trends drawn from departing staff feedback about the Department. HR is a permanent agenda item in senior level meetings, allowing management to make informed decisions that are data-driven, and ensuring transparency regarding all major staff issues at the highest level.

Leadership promotes and exemplifies its strategy of strong

“Leadership promotes and exemplifies its strategy of strong communication and listening to drive the visibility of HR in all aspects of the workplace and to build a sense of unity in driving the Department forward.”

² DST Exit Survey Questionnaire June 2012



communication and listening to drive the visibility of HR in all aspects of the workplace and to build a sense of unity in driving the Department forward. For example, defining the moderation process for the PMDS policy was based on a comprehensive consultation process. This included consulting external lawyers as well as all Departmental staff, who were given multiple scenarios to choose from on how to approach the moderation process. In this way, leadership supports a bottom-up approach to grow.

Through its focus on strong policy implementation, and on engaging employees themselves in the processes of reflection and change, the Department's leadership is able to build a culture beyond compliance, where innovation and creativity can flourish, which is essential for science and technology in South Africa.

More to learn for the road ahead

The DST is a people's department. It is able to find, support and retain the right person for the right job by being strategic, communicative, agile, supportive,



focused, innovative and above all, recognising that people matter. However, there are many challenges that remain for the DST. The emphasis on staff training and development opportunities and career path project initiatives attempts to strengthen staff retention. However, this is a constant battle in spite of the positive and supportive organisational culture, due to the limited nature of career succession or promotion in the Department.

This also links to the challenge of ensuring that people who are being continually developed are then used to their maximum capacity, when promotion is not an option. Therefore, promoting a culture of continuous improvement without offering adequate space to expand one's responsibilities within a role can have the negative side-effect of leading to an increase in turnover rates "but there is rotation within the sector, so we get the people back, only more skilled," says the department.

The Department has been working on a tool that would establish a new approach to specialist career paths, but this is far from authorisation at this stage. Other challenges stem from the fact that this is a small Department with big ideas. HR has developed a whole raft of initiatives and ideas; the challenge is in their full implementation, to ensure that initiatives are accessible or applied to everyone and are seen through to completion:

These challenges highlight the

need for balance and strategic mindfulness, where focused HR and an engaged leadership are crucial. The DST has built a high-performing HR section that is willing and able to think of the most cutting edge tools for people development and yet people sometimes simply need to be given the space and time to deliver on their work. The challenge for such high-performing HR units is to prioritise and identify the HR interventions that are most important and can be used to leverage for top performance across the board.

The DST is in a position to hone their 'people matter' approach even further. This hinges on reducing the administrative and time-consuming burden of required HR practices, without losing the essential elements that make the Department a special place to work. This will enable the Department to be incisive in its approach, to still ensure that the right person is recruited for the job, to prioritise personal development and performance management at implementation and policy level, to ensure decisions are data-driven and consultative. This will continue to increase the confidence from managers and top leadership to trust employees to do their work well. This will give Zanele and many others the appropriate, skilled, supported employees like her the space and motivation to excel, to be the high-achieving specialist that she has become. ■



CDWS IN CHANGING TIMES

Common and coherent public participations policies and their implementation are key to social stability, reports Dudley Molo

A meeting at which the ward councillor and local mayor were to address long standing community grievances on lack of service delivery, descends into chaos. Deaf to the repeated calls for calm by a Community Development Worker (CDW), loud insults and chairs fly in the air unabated. The town mayor leaves the rowdy gathering in a huff and a threat not to honour future meetings “unless the people behave”. And so with fuel added to the fiery mood of the community, the gathering dissipates.

Fortunately, the above scenario was merely a role-play at a community participation workshop, which was held in Worcester, in the Western Cape Province, in August 2015. Similar workshops were held in other provinces to discuss the role of Community Development Workers and the ever complex (if not dangerous) environment this

layer of public servants increasingly have to work under.

According to Florence Maleka, Chief Director in charge of the CDWs Programme at the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), public participation is the cornerstone of governance in South Africa. The Constitution and a myriad of other legislations and policies weave public participation into the fabric of all administrative and developmental endeavours. Yet,

says Maleka, the generalised lack of (or effective) public participation continues to be the bane to public service delivery.

A 2008 report by the Public Service Commission (PSC) suggested that only 25% of the 16 departments that were surveyed met the basic requirements for public participation. However, approximately 44% of the polled departments had public participation units in place, but these mostly operated on the



basis of a gobble-gook of policies and guidelines for such a crucial constitutional imperative. The overall conclusion of the 2008 PSC study was a renewed call for the institutionalisation of the public participation in the interest of good governance and impactful service delivery.

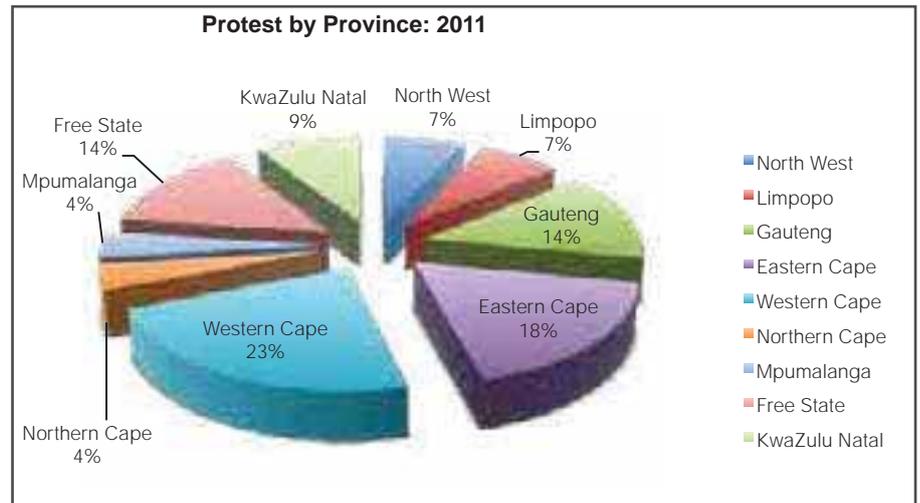
Although the root causes of the tumult among communities have had many explanations, the triggers to violent protest have been specific enough. These include persistent poverty, high levels of unemployment, inadequate service delivery and disputes over municipal boundaries, as well as leadership contestations. The weak or none-existent culture of effective public participation worsens an already flammable set of circumstances. It is neither a root cause nor a trigger, but a fundamental oversight in governance.

“South Africa is experiencing escalating levels of violent community protests and since the beginning of 2014, at least five incidents of protests are reported daily,” says Maleka.

Several years after the study, there appears to be very little evidence that the majority of government entities heeded the call by the PSC. In 2014, the DPSA issued a guide on public participation (see sidebar article) in the Public Service.

The policy guidelines, which were the subject of countrywide workshops, sought to close the conceptual and implementation gaps in public participation.

Moreover, the provincial CDWs workshops were used as an opportunity to hook key government campaigns and policies like the Know-Your-Services-Rights and the National Development Plan, which were respectively instituted in 2007 and 2012. The national footprint of over 3 000 CDWs layer of public servants play a huge role in fostering public participation and bringing government and the people together.



Source: Karamoko J, 2011





“ South Africa is experiencing escalating levels of violent community protests and since the beginning of 2014, at least five incidents of protests are reported daily. ”

Governments the world over are continually finding new and innovative ways of deepening relations to better serve their people, as well as entrench the participation of all their citizens in their work. In South Africa too, government’s commitment to public participation is a constitutional imperative.

It is an alienable part of public administration, good governance and is crucial to successfully

implementing the Vision 2030 of the National Development Plan (NDP).

The Guide on Public Participation in the Public Service Policy that the Department of Public Service and Administration issued in 2014, has the following objectives:

- To help Government institutions with building the required capacity for them to institutionalise public participation
- To re-emphasise the fact that government institutions are legally bound by the laws of the country and their provisions for engaging communities in all aspects of their operations
- To emphasise the usefulness of public participation as a tool that is critical to mitigating potential conflicts with communities on decision-making with regard to policies, projects, programmes or any other developmental initiatives.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDE AT A GLANCE

What is public participation?

A snap survey by the DPSA of 10 national departments indicated that most government institutions appeared to be clueless of what public participation entails. It also found that the biggest source of inertia or confusion had to do with the interchangeable use of terminology. The guide, for this reason, opts for “public participation,” which aims to “influence and share control over development initiatives and the resources which affect communities and people”. Moreover, the preferred term is much broader in scope and inclusive of specific forms of participation.

Objective-specific

The guide further asserts that the form and extent of public participation is determined by the objective for which participation is sought. In addition, the objective

has a bearing on the kind of stakeholders that a government institution may be legally bound to engage in public participation and the range of likely stakeholders is noted in the guide. However, the process is similar, irrespective of the situation or objective and typically involves the following steps:

1. Consensus-building on the overall purpose of the call for public participation
2. Determining roles and responsibilities on the part of the department and participants
3. Developing a public participation plan
4. Implementing the above plan
5. Providing public feedback on the outcomes of the public participation
6. Evaluating the public participation initiative

The guide lists izimbizo (public meetings); public hearings; ward committees; Community Development Workers (CDWs), African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM); and the Open Government (OGP) among the commonly used public participation methods in South Africa and includes a checklist for deciding on the appropriate format.





SOLAR POWERED SHACKS

The iShack Solar Project sells an off-the-grid solution to the electricity needs of shanties, writes Dudley Moloï.

Living on the edge

Enkanini, an informal settlement on the outskirts of Stellenbosch in the Western Cape Province, presents a paradox to authorities. The land that Enkanini residents illegally occupied in 2006 is on the edges of Kayamandi, one of the oldest townships in the Western Cape Province.

With such a defiant a name as “Enkanini”, or “place of stubbornness”, possible relocation has always been a non-starter for residents. Their robust (and at times violent) opposition to being moved elsewhere had successfully earned the community some form of official tenure. However, the land that was previously earmarked as a nature reserve is yet to be formally re-zoned for residential purposes.

Under different circumstances, Enkanini would make for coveted real estate. The swath of shacks is perched high up a mountain and overlooks the majestic Hottentot Hollandse Mountains as well as the valley of wine estates on the slopes. There is a view to die for, though residents of this informal settlement have borne the brunt for want of life’s most basic needs.

A 2012 Enkanini Household Enumeration Report by the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) paints a bleak picture of life in the community of over 4 000 people. The CORC report asserts that Enkanini had ratios of one toilet to 72 residents and one communal tap to 139 people (eighty communal toilet blocks and 32 communal water taps were counted at the time).

Apart from illegal electricity connections, most households rely heavily on open flame energy sources, such as wood, paraffin and gas, as well as candles. The dangers posed by the lack of safe energy, coupled with the highly flammable building material, turns the informal settlement into a regular powder keg of fires in winter and flooding in summer seasons.

Enkanini’s precarious location, its closely built shacks and narrow passageways make emergency response to disasters near impossible. The seasonal outbreak of fires is typically allowed to wear itself out as residents and authorities alike helplessly watch the unfolding disaster with a stoicism born out of experience.



“*The iShack Project ultimately aims for the overall improvement in the living conditions of the residents of Enkanini and without having to resort to highly contentious evictions, albeit temporary.*”

In situ service delivery

When a group of Stellenbosch University students came up with the ‘improved shack’ (iShack) idea back in 2012, it was with the intention of solving the development puzzle that Enkanini presented. In this, the iShack Project rode on the policy shift on the part of the Department of Human Settlement (DHS), when the Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme (UISP) was introduced.

The UISP is informed by the pressing urgency for housing which drives the rise of informal settlements. Beyond the realism, is the UISP’s acknowledgement that the residents of informal settlements ought to be viewed as part of the solution rather than stumbling blocks to the delivery of safe and decent housing.

The iShack Project ultimately aims for the overall improvement in the living conditions of the residents of Enkanini and without having

to resort to highly contentious evictions, albeit temporary. Such incremental improvements range from water to sanitation services, as identified by the previously mentioned CORC report. However, to date, the main focus of the iShack Project has been the provision of solar powered electricity.

“We are simply trying to provide some kind of basic, affordable and sustainable clean energy service (with a green job creation component), while the community waits for more ‘formal’ services to arrive,” explains iShack Project manager, Damian Conway.

Solar dynamics

Now in its third year, the developmental dynamics and technical processes leading up to the launch of the iShack Project in Enkanini, makes for what could be described as a highly “complex developmental challenge.”

According to local Community Development Worker (CDW), Kwanele Gugushe, the community was initially divided over the adoption of the iShack Project. Some residents held the view that the solar project was a mere ruse on the part of local authorities not to recognise the full tenancy of the informal settlement’s residents.

At the time of the author’s visit in August 2015, the iShack customer energy hub, or “e-spaza”, was indefinitely closed after a service delivery protest that swept through the town of Stellenbosch in June 2015. Nevertheless, perched on the steps of the e-spaza, one could see a sizeable number of shacks with the tell-tale solar panel on their rickety zinc-roofs.

Yondela Tyawa, who was involved with the original ‘co-productive’ research work with the university students, but now prefers to referred to as a “member of the community”, estimates the number of iShack subscribers to be “plus

or minus 1 000” households. The figure somewhat tallies with “the 40% of the people”, which is CDW Gugushe’s estimate.

The standard costs for joining is a once-off joining fee of R150, which includes the installation and one month of free electricity. The energy service includes two internal lights, an outside security light, the use of a small television set and cell-phone charging. Then there is a further R130 monthly fee for the maintenance of the system. (This fee had recently been reduced from R150). Clients who keep up payments throughout the year, get December for free. Clients who can not keep up payments are moved to a more flexible “Pay As You Go” package.

Another former iShack agent, whose name is being withheld, has delinked from the solar project. He now relies on an illegal electricity connection “from another house”, which costs him R500 monthly, for lighting, TV and charging his phone. This former client holds the view that iShack is “not acceptable as the project is blocking electricity.’ Besides having damaged his cellphone battery, he is adamant that the solar route is “not helpful, especially in winter, when it sometimes rains all the time [and therefore] forces us to go back to using paraffin and gas.’

Makeleni Nokubonga, another iShack Project subscriber, has been using solar power since September 2014. She says the solar energy initiative as helpful as long as there are sunny days; otherwise she has

to buy gas. The cost of filling up a gas bottle is R180 and can last as long as two months. Nokubonga feels that solar power would be widely adopted if it could be used for a fridge and for cooking, which is a view that is shared by many others, she says. The project is now piloting fridge upgrades. There are currently nine residents who have fridges running off solar, according to the iShack Project manager, Damian Conway.

Conway is of the view that the iShack Projects enjoys majority support in the informal community of Enkanini, despite the complexities of the project.

“Our impression is that the majority of residents and paying clients still support the service and we are still trying to find ways to develop



forums to engage further with the community around their legitimate concerns and feedback," Conway explains.

A quick sweep down the labyrinth of zinc and high tech of Enkanini informal settlement hardly provides a complete picture of the success or otherwise of the iShack Project. The murmurings are as real as the shiny-blue panels that adorn a sizeable number of rooftops in the informal settlement.

What, however, cannot be easily begrudged of the iShack Project is the fact that it is undoubtedly a game-changer in terms of government's stated policy of incremental upgrading of informal settlements. More so, as makeshift settlements such as Enkanini are a growing feature of the country's town and cityscapes, which require innovative responses to the developmental challenges they pose. ■

iShack in a nutshell

The iShack Project runs an off-grid solar home system business (on a not-for-profit, but financially sustainable basis) for residents of the settlement, and is aiming to develop this as a franchise model for export to other informal settlements, with the Enkanini iShack Project as the first of these franchises. Solar home systems consisting of a 70 - 90 Watts panel, two indoor LED lights, one TV, an outdoor spotlight and phone charging facilities are provided to residents on a fee-for-service basis, with customers paying an initial installation fee of R150, and monthly installments of R130 thereafter to use the system.

A further deposit component is now being introduced to reduce the rate and cost of system damage and theft. Users can also choose to upgrade their panels to cover other appliances such as fridges or DVD players. iShack takes responsibility for operation and maintenance of the system, and since 2011 over 1000 systems have been installed out of 2,500 households in the settlement under the project.

Among other support, the iShack 'demonstration' project is funded by national government, through the Green Fund of the national Department of Environmental Affairs. It also enjoys the support of the Stellenbosch Municipality, which has made it possible for indigent residents of Enkanini to have their solar subscription subsidised in line the applicable policy.

In November 2015, Stellenbosch Municipality received an award from the South African National Energy Association (SANEA) in relation to the iShack Project.



The burden of debt



The high level of indebtedness among public servants could potentially undermine the gains made over the past two decades, argues Khumbula Ndaba.*

No other economic sector has enjoyed the direct benefits of the post-1994 dispensation more than the Public Service. The depth with which the apartheid administration had been transformed over the past twenty one years attests this much. So does the marked changes in the working conditions of all public servants, irrespective of race, gender or the many forms of discrimination that were peculiar to South Africa's past.

In 1996, Government and labour unions signed South Africa's first ever Public Service wage agreement. This first post-apartheid multi-year agreement was historic in many respects, most crucial of which was that it affirmed the labour rights of millions of public servants, after years of exclusion under apartheid.

The 1996 settlement also sought to normalise the then racially distorted wage and benefits regime in the Public Service through unprecedented wage increases amongst the lowest level employees.

What is now widely referred to as the "Mandela effect", for example, saw Grade 1 employees receive a 29.5% raise and in some instances advancing to Grade 2. The intervention further resulted in increases of 35% for employees between Grades 2 to 6, in addition to normalising other employment benefits, most crucially, pensions.

In his input at the Third Biennial Labour Relations Conference in 2013, the then Industrial Association of South Africa (IRASA) Interim President, Johan Maree, estimated that the total personnel

costs as a percentage of budget expenses increased over the three-year period from 46.6% to 50.1%. The state's salary bill, Maree calculated, increased by 12.2% per year on average.

It is possible that Maree somewhat exaggerated the government wage bill as a percentage of total expenditure during this period, but this does not detract from the fact that the salaries of public servants have improved significantly over time. The National Treasury estimates that the government wage bill accounts for about 38% of total government expenditure.

At the time, Maree observed that "overall employment in the Public Service declined by more than 13% over 1996-98 (a loss of nearly 170 000 jobs)", yet there was a discernible increase of 7% in the

middle employment echelons, or the job Grades 6 to 9. At the end of June 2015, the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) partners signed an all-encompassing third multi-year agreement since the first one in 1999. The latest bargaining agreement has eight resolutions (see side-bar article) and covers more than salary increases, but also medical and housing subsidies, as well as employee development, among others.

Like previous settlements, the latest agreement is transformative in nature and seeks to change the lives of public servants, both in the workplace and beyond. As a result, a majority of public servants now make up part of the top 30% of highly paid wage earners in South Africa, according to the National Treasury's 2015 budget review.

That the Public Service enjoys the status of employer of choice did not happen by chance. It is a result of years of hard-won battles by public servants themselves and the responsiveness of successive post-apartheid administrations. The transformation of the Public Service is arguably one of the most important post-1994 milestones, much of which could be credited to the shared developmental vision of Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council partners.

Though far from adversarial, creating an impression of a lovey-dovey relationship between labour and Government as employer, would be far from honest. The workings of the bargaining council

are akin to walking a tightrope, and one that is flanked on either side by all-too-genuine needs of public servants and those of people they serve.

Debt trap

Despite compelling evidence of overall improvements in their conditions of service, the high levels of indebtedness among public servants looms like the figurative elephant in the room.

A May 2014 report of the National Credit Regulator (NCR) paints a dire picture of the levels of indebtedness among all South Africans. Nearly half (47.5%) of the estimated 19 million people who had access to credit were found to be more than three months in arrears with their debt repayments. The extent of indebtedness among Public Service employees is equally alarming.

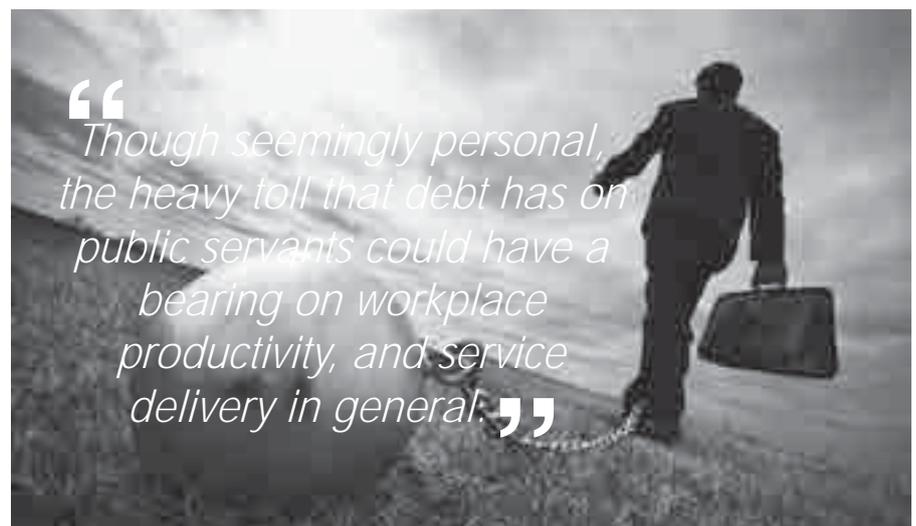
According to the 2006/7 Public Service Commission (PSC) report, as much as 20% of the total of government employees (or some

216 857 public servants) were in serious debt nearly ten years ago. While a liberal deduction of the previously cited National Credit Regulator (NCR) figures put the estimated number of seriously indebted public servants as high as 600 000 people, or half of the 1.2 million workforce.

Like everyone else, public servants have legitimate needs, wants and aspirations. These, however, have to be met in a sustainable way. But unlike the rest of society, the behaviour of public servants is expected to be exemplary. Over-reliance on unscrupulous lenders can never be a sustainable solution to real or perceived financial challenges.

“Short-termism”

That a large number of public servants continue to live a hand-to-mouth existence has obvious consequences on the quality of life of the affected individuals (and their dependents). The burden of debt could potentially cloud judgement and the propensity for



short-termism as the vicious cycle of borrowing from Marie to pay Vusi deepens. In utter desperation, some public servants have been forced into premature resignations with the hope of clawing their way out of the debt pit by prematurely cashing-out of their pensions.

Though seemingly personal, the heavy toll that debt has on public servants could have a bearing on workplace productivity, and service delivery in general. The high levels of money-related stresses also have serious implications for both the tone and nature of collective bargaining in the Public Service by fostering narrow haggling over percentage points and unreasonably high wage demands.

The current labour relations regime is underpinned by the respect for the aspirations of individual public servants to improve their working conditions and lives. It is a hard-won right to organise and bargain in the Public Service, having been recognised for the first time after 1994. However, there are some trade-offs that society expects of public servants' because of their centrality in the advancement of the nation's transformation agenda.

“For its part, government continues in its commitment to ensure that its employees earn more than a living wage.”



Living by example

In a developmental state, public servants have a far greater role to play in tackling poverty, unemployment and inequalities that continue to blight Government's best effort. For this reason, though relatively better off than many people, public servants have an even greater responsibility to leading an exemplary life, both in the workplace and beyond. A big part of leading society is shunning any kind of conduct that could potentially drag individuals and communities down the precipice of debt. The high levels of debt among public servants entrench negative perceptions of public servants as self-centred and corruption prone. Whether justified or not, such views are often linked to the inability of individual public servants to manage their personal finances.

For its part, government continues in its commitment to ensure that its employees earn more than a living wage. This includes a grave concern over

the extent to which rising personal debts of employees erode their livelihoods. However, beyond exploring various financial options in order to stem the tide of debt, the buck finally stops with the public servants themselves.

The Economy

As the global economy, including ours, exhibit symptoms of decline, it is even more important for us all to be circumspect about our investment and spending patterns.

Although we pride ourselves in improving the salaries and other conditions of service of Public Service employees, it is critical that we should continue to manage the wage bill very closely to allow the resources of the state to finance infrastructure development, service delivery improvement and operational expenditure of government institutions ■

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"A leader's credibility begins with personal success. It ends with helping others achieve personal success."

In 1966, United States Senator, Robert Kennedy made an influential visit to South Africa. He offered words of hope to opponents of apartheid in his famous 'Ripple of Hope' speech at the University of Cape Town:

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

At times in this world, hope seems scarce. Governments that lose credibility lose the quality of being trusted and believed. Managers who have scant regard for credibility lose the quality of being convincing or believable. In credibility, the hopeless find hope.

Incredible teamwork

Creative teams can create all day long. But innovation matters less when the rest of the organisation does not trust them. When credibility erodes, it creates barriers for creators and their creations. Creative ideas and results become creations for vanity's sake, if not shared.

So how is credibility protected? What traps can damage credibility inside organisations? Here are ten lessons of incredible teams:

1. **Avoid hype.** The old adage is 'never read your own press' good or bad. Accepting praise also means setting expectations for accepting failure. Balance is found in remembering the work, process and team. Effective teams celebrate wins and learn from losses.
2. **Keep creating.** New ideas and creations refresh the team and others with whom it works. When elements are repeated or reused, future creativity and innovation may be compromised.

A small shortcut can impair the creative culture of organisations.

3. **Continue learning.** Researching what others are doing and what is working is essential to studying your sector. New-agers also know where art is going and how technology can be leveraged. Those who read a lot and keep learning stay sharp and creative.
4. **Respect others.** No one wants to work with difficult people. Eventually, the pain of trying to work together transcends talent and isolates malcontents. People judge themselves on intention and others on action. Always treat people how you would want to be treated.
5. **Stay flexible.** Flexibility and creativity go hand in hand. When teams stop being flexible, they strangle the creative process. Fighting for ways to be flexible creates space for creativity.
6. **Meet deadlines.** Managing time encompasses the entire scope of the project. When teams fail to plan, they hurt the best creative ideas. Finding ways to work further ahead on projects, creates space to breathe and to produce the best work, not just the fastest.
7. **Keep promises.** Overpromising and under-delivering are unsustainable. Failure to keep promises hurts relations and results

every time. Never make promises over which the team has no control.

8. **Ask questions.** If teams stop asking questions, they ignore possibilities. Curiosity and inquisitiveness make every project better. There are no dumb questions.
9. **Stress positivity.** Teams need to watch out for the first hint of negative thinking. Every problem is an opportunity. The default response should be to proclaim 'yes we can'.
10. **Learn humility.** Involving and listening to people with experience is good practice. Teams do not always have to be right. They just have to have a great attitude and be willing to adapt to get things done. Taking time to make corrections can avoid heading down the wrong path.

“*To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful.*”



Incredible middle managers

Pioneering Canadian Broadcast Service journalist, Edward R. Murrow declared: “To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful.”

In the Mi'kmaq tradition of smudging, sweet grass smoke is wafted with an eagle's feather in sequence above the head, heart, eyes, ears and feet. The smudge cleanses negativity and brings positive thoughts, feelings, sights, sounds and grounding. Practitioners are then better prepared to respond in peace and friendship to the challenges ahead.

Middle managers lead teams that thrive in an environment of continuous change and challenge. They bridge gaps in Public Service culture and capacity to remedy deficits in trust, confidence and enthusiasm. The credible ones succeed when they 'walk the talk' and give hope to others. ■

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RECLAIMING THE PUBLIC SERVICE RESEARCH SPACE

A Public Administration Research Strategy is a critical ingredient in the attainment of the National Development Plan (NDP) objective of building the capability, reflects Dr Patrick Sokhela, Chief Director: Research and Public Administration Discourse, at the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA).

Since the critical success factors for the NDP are all largely premised on the continual availability of solid research in all the NDP priority areas; Government in particular is required to, *inter alia*, partner with the private sector to raise the level of research and development, with resources targeted towards building the research infrastructure required by a modern economy.

To this effect, DPSA has established a new Research and Policy Analysis Unit whose main function is to ensure that DPSA becomes a new hub for public administration research and policy analysis, acts as a platform for emerging public administration discourse and ensures that such crucial case studies and best practices are disseminated to the relevant departments and other

interested stakeholders. This would ensure, *inter alia*, improved decision-making and an efficient and effective public administration which is informed by national and international best practices.

Conceptual Note to Inform the Research Agenda and Research Strategy

A Concept Note was developed in June 2014 and was used as a basis to engage, brief and consult selected representatives from higher education institutions, research institutions and sector departments about the establishment, functioning and the mandate of the newly established Research and Policy Analysis Unit, with a view to soliciting their input on how best the DPSA could collaborate and partner with the selected institutions on research

and public administration discourse issues in the context of building a capable and developmental state, as envisaged in Chapter 13 of the NDP and the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-19. This also entailed soliciting their input into finalising the Research Agenda for the Public Administration Research Strategy.

In brief, the high level purpose and objectives of the Concept Note are to:

- Introduce the role of the Research and Policy Analysis Unit and to lay the ground for its functioning
- Introduce the key role of the Research and Policy Analysis Unit which is to manage the research agenda and platforms, and reporting on national and international

trends and best practices, with a view to promoting an efficient and effective public administration

- Ensure that the research undertaken in public administration is aligned with the adopted research agenda for public administration, including research protocols, tools and instruments to facilitate public administration efficiency and efficacy
- Kick-start a process of collaborating and forming partnerships with key institutions in the research field, including higher education institutions and research institutions in order to ensure alignment in achieving a capable and developmental state
- Develop a Public Administration Research Strategy in consultation with all role players which seeks to respond to the expectations of solutions which evaluate the efficacy of the outcomes of selected MTSF 2014-19 projects.

Progress Thus Far

In July 2014, the Minister for Public Service and Administration (MPSA) addressed the Annual Conference of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) which was held in Port Elizabeth. At the said Annual Conference, the MPSA, *inter alia*, outlined the *modus operandi* of the Research and Policy Analysis Unit in tackling the research and public administration discourse

issues in line with the NDP and the MTSF 2014-19.

The MPSA also stated, *inter alia*, that:

“DPSA has, on 27 June 2014, convened a consultation workshop with academia and the South Africa Association of Public Administration and Management (SAAPAM) with a view to soliciting their input on how best the DPSA could collaborate and partner with the selected institutions on research and public administration discourse issues in the context of building a capable and developmental state as envisaged in Chapter 13 of the NDP and the MTSF 2014-19.

As a result, it has been agreed that a Forum be established between the DPSA and Academia/ Research oriented institutes where, *inter alia*, matters of common interest would be discussed and information shared in the context of contributing to an academic journal, policy briefs and occasional papers from the Public Service.

Government has also established the National School of Government (NSG) in 2013. The NSG has to play a significant role in overseeing the professional common purpose in addressing the systemic challenges of Public Service delivery, through the learning and development of public officials. In doing so, the NSG also has a triangular approach of integrating the past, with the present, to the future.

It is in this context that the DPSA is working together with the NSG in the development of the Public Administration Research Strategy, which includes the holding of the annual research conference and the launching of the South African Public Administration Journal (SAPAJ). The MPSA formally approved the following interventions:

- The establishment of a Public Administration Research Forum which was launched on 28 November 2014 as a mechanism to:
 - Create a platform and network for engagement around the research agenda of sector departments in responding to the priorities of the NDP and the MTSF
 - Promote a culture of evidence based decision-making in government
 - Share case studies and research methodology relevant for the South African Public Administration
 - Establish research protocols on how government departments need to manage researchers’ requests for access to government documents and data
- The establishment of a Public Administration-Academia Forum which was established on 27 February 2015 as a mechanism to ensure that:



- Academia contributes to initiatives and activities so as to improve government policies, programmes and effective service delivery
- A platform is created for bilateral and multilateral collaboration and partnerships between the DPSA and the different Schools of Public Management and Administration/ Governance

Elements of the Draft Public Administration Research Strategy

The Public Administration generally and the public service in particular do not make decisions based on empirical evidence through grounded research as an institutional practice. The unintended consequences of major policy choices pointed continually to lack of a sufficient embedded research culture and practice. Hence, the mainstay of the Public Administration Research Strategy is to establish collaborations and partnerships with internal and external institutions that are active in the research field with a view to, *inter alia*, solicit ideas on effective co-ordination in the best interest of public service development and advancement through informed reforms. This will be achieved within the context of the following documents:

- The National Development Plan

- Medium Term Strategic Framework 2014-19
- The Africa Public Service Charter (the Charter)
- The Ministerial Priorities

For the MTSF 2014-19 period, as part of the evolving Public Administration Research Strategy, the research priorities are based on the following four research focus areas:

I.	THEME 1:	Implementing Strategic Public Governance Capability through managing the political-administrative interface to strengthen decision-making, leadership and administrative oversight
II.	THEME 2:	Ensuring efficient and effective systems and processes through operations, performance and productivity management
III.	THEME 3:	Strengthening vertical and horizontal accountability of co-ordinated and integrated government through norms and standards and through better co-ordination by the centre of government departments
IV.	THEME 4:	Improving skills and competencies and professionalising the Public Service through better Human Resource Management policies and practices

As and when a need is identified for empirical research to be undertaken, such research will be either done in-house, or in collaboration with other sector entities or commissioned in partnership with relevant institutions, as guided by the four research thematic areas which will identify research topics.

Way Forward

Going forward, the DPSA has been mandated by the Public Administration Research Forum to *inter alia*:

- Finalise the Public Administration Research Strategy after consultation with the Governance and Administration Cluster (G&A Cluster)
- Make preparations for the hosting of the first annual Public Administration Research Conference scheduled for August/September 2016
- Make preparations for the launch of the annual South African Public Administration Journal (SAPAJ), and seek national and international accreditation with the relevant professional institutions

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Better Data, Better Lives



Statistics should inform policy direction and in the case of South Africa, statistical data is instrumental in tracking progress towards the realisation of the NDP 2030 goals, argues Statistician-General, Pali Lehohla.

“Better data, better lives”, was the commitment from official statistics organisations across the world as part of celebrating World Statistics Day, which was held in October 20, 2015. Statistics should inform policy direction and in the case of South Africa statistical data are instrumental in tracking progress towards the realisation of the NDP 2030 goals. Tracking progress will rely heavily on statistical data that can encourage policy review and adjustment where applicable, statistical data becomes redundant if they are not able to shape policy imperatives. Statistics South Africa produces statistical data to guide almost every key deliverable contained in the NDP and this is also available to institutions that have the mandate to see through the implementation thereof.

The Citizen Satisfaction Survey (CSS) currently on field in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is one example of the state taking advantage of the capabilities at its disposal to afford its citizens the opportunity to give their opinion on the effectiveness in improving their lives in the province. This survey is being conducted at the behest of the premier of KZN, the honourable Senzo Mchunu. The survey seeks to engage citizens on the levels of satisfaction with regard to service delivery by government departments in the province. It will also serve as an indicator on governance efficiency for Goal 6 (i.e. Governance) of the Provincial Growth and Development Plan (PGDP). The results of the CSS in KwaZulu-Natal will help the Office of the Premier to make informed decisions to improve the lives of the citizen of KZN.

Data revolution

Stats SA continues to actively engage the international statistics fraternity around issues related to the Data Revolution, which is a term coined to describe the

“The work that Stats SA does, relies on efficient stakeholder mobilisation and as an example, the success of the declaration of 2015 to 2024 as the Decade of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics.”

latest trends in technology which includes, among others, deploying mobile and hand held devices, satellite imagery and advocates the use of technologies to improve and make data collection more affordable. Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI), which is characterised by real-time data capturing of respondent information onto a device (such as a laptop, PDA, cellphone, etc.) by a fieldworker instead of using a paper questionnaire, is one of the latest data collection technologies adopted by Stats SA. The CSS in KZN provided an opportunity for Stats SA to use the CAPI method for the first time in the country. The CAPI will also be used to collect data when the second Community Survey (CS 2016) is conducted.

The work that Stats SA does relies on efficient stakeholder mobilisation and the success in the implementation of the declaration of 2015 to 2024 as the Decade of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics. This is to ensure that every birth

and death is registered, including the causes of these deaths, which cannot be realised without efficient administration and record keeping by the Departments of Health and Home Affairs. Tourism statistics also rely on the efficient data coding by the Department of Home Affairs, which collects this data at the entry points to the country.

Stats SA does not shy away from the need to invest in human capital development, hence, its participation on the Centre for Regional and Urban Innovation and Statistical Exploration (CRUISE) in Stellenbosch, where senior management and subject specialist are selected and enrolled on the programme to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to produce quality statistics.

Home of official statistics

The media, academia and other producers of statistics remain powerful societal influencers as citizens' looks up to different

producers of data to satisfy their need for information, and in this way to hold government to account. It is, however, essential to remember that Stats SA is the only producer of official statistics in the country, and it performs this important task through the continued engagement with different stakeholders and partners. This is crucial to ensure that there is a relationship of trust between the organisation and its stakeholders in their entirety.

That the statistics are trustworthy is an imperative prescribed by the guiding principles that govern statistics agencies and to which Stats SA subscribes, namely – the United Nations Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics, as well as the recently produced African Charter on Statistics, but much work still needs to be done around the consolidation of a Strategy for the Harmonisation of Statistics in Africa and ensuring that not a single African is left behind. ■

“Tracking progress will rely heavily on statistical data that can encourage policy review and adjustment where applicable, statistical data becomes redundant if they are not able to shape policy imperatives.”

The Impact of Workplace Presenteeism on *Public Service Productivity*

Ismail Davids and Manaseh Tshiguvu of the Directorate: Productivity and Efficiency Studies in the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) warn against the corrosive impact of the little known “presenteeism” phenomenon on the productivity of public servants.

One of the frequently acknowledged challenges related to improving organisational productivity is the high levels of workplace *absenteeism* due to illness and other reasons. Research conducted by *Statistics South Africa* found that on average, 15% of employees are absent on any given day, resulting in lost productivity costing the economy between R12 billion and R16 billion annually¹. There is, however, a ‘new’ and perhaps even greater challenge to organisational productivity in the form of workplace *presenteeism*². And the public sector in particular, it would seem, is not paying adequate attention to this ‘new’ threat to its levels of productivity. This study therefore draws attention to the impact of workplace *presenteeism* on Public Service Productivity (PSP) by discussing its prevalence in a selected Public Service organisation and asking whether the organisation has appropriate strategies in place to mitigate the impact of *presenteeism* on its productivity.

What is workplace Presenteeism?

Health-related *absenteeism* is an easily understandable concept of not attending work when ill. In this instance, the lost productivity to the organisation is 100% each day the employee is not on the job. Workplace *presenteeism*, on the other hand, refers to the lost productivity that arises when employees continue to work when unwell or are distracted from achieving full productivity due other events such as ‘office politics’ or child care problems³. This lost productivity can include performance issues, such as, not meeting deadlines, difficulty in concentrating, not being able to think clearly, making mistakes, and not being able to carry out the physical requirements of a job (e.g. lifting objects). Another major contributor to lost organisational productivity is workplace *shirking*, which refers to employees who are at work but not working to their full capacity due to personal

motivation issues on their part or gross deficiencies in organisational leadership and supervision that manifest in employees not being held to account for workplace deliverables. From a PSP improvement perspective, the prevalence and impact of workplace *absenteeism*, *presenteeism* and *shirking* must be better understood, measured and managed.

It is well-established that a great number of employees come to work not feeling well – they work with allergies, back pain, chronic illnesses, stress about organisational politics or child care responsibilities, and other factors that can impair their workplace performance and productivity⁴. Some employees come to work with contagious illnesses such as influenza or a common cold that may infect others, and this could contribute to further *absenteeism* and/or *presenteeism* in the workplace.



Workplace presenteeism in DEPARTMENT X

To explore the impact of workplace *presenteeism* on PSP, the Directorate: Productivity and Efficiency Studies in the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) conducted a survey amongst a sample of employees of a national department in January 2015. The identity of this particular department, referred throughout as DEPARTMENT X, has been withheld due to the sensitivity

of some of the results that emerged from the brief study, which are discussed below:

Frequently not well

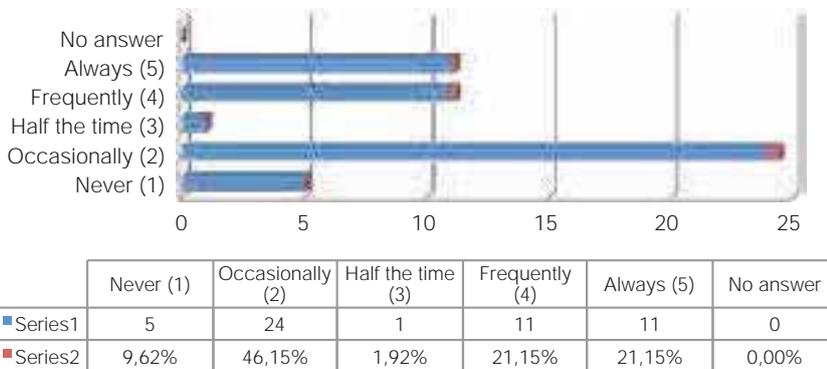
Collectively, almost half of the respondents 'always' or 'frequently' report for work despite feeling unwell (42.5%). DEPARTMENT X is thus losing almost half their contribution to the organisation's productivity on the days when these employees are at work and not feeling well (see *Chart 1* below).

This place makes me sick

Allergies (18%) are the most common illness contributing to workplace presenteeism in DEPARTMENT X. Employees interviewed cited their physical working environment as the primary reason for their allergies – unhygienic carpets, closed windows/poor ventilation and pigeon faeces that, when it dries, becomes airborne and is inhaled through the air-conditioning vents that are almost permanently broken. The study revealed that *influenza* and *common colds* account for 13% of illnesses, followed by *migraines* (10%). The high occurrence of influenza and colds amongst employees who come to work while ill, means they contribute to further *presenteeism* and/or *absenteeism* in the workplace due to the infectious nature of their illness. *Depression* and *coughs* accounted for 9 % respectively. The relatively high ranking of depression in DEPARTMENT X is in line with international trends, which show that depression usually ranks high amongst illnesses associated with *presenteeism* because of the unwillingness of some employees to disclose their condition to their employer⁵. They worry that if they disclose they may be at risk of losing their job and not finding another.

A principal reason cited by DEPARTMENT X respondents for not taking paid sick leave when ill, is that their work will not be attended to should they be absent. Over 32% of DEPARTMENT X

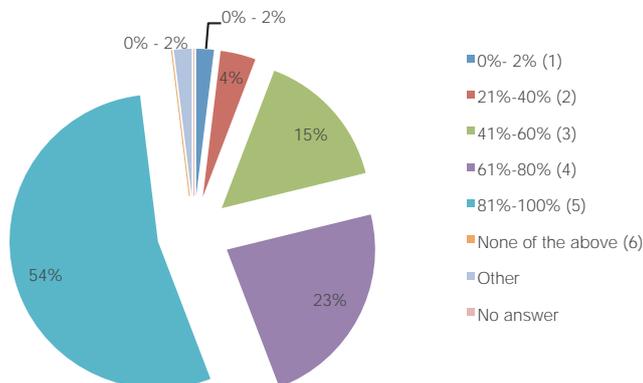
Chart 1: Going to work despite feeling unwell



This significant loss in productivity is affirmed by *Chart 2* that shows employee perceptions that they

lose almost half (46%) their usual levels of productivity due to illness at work.

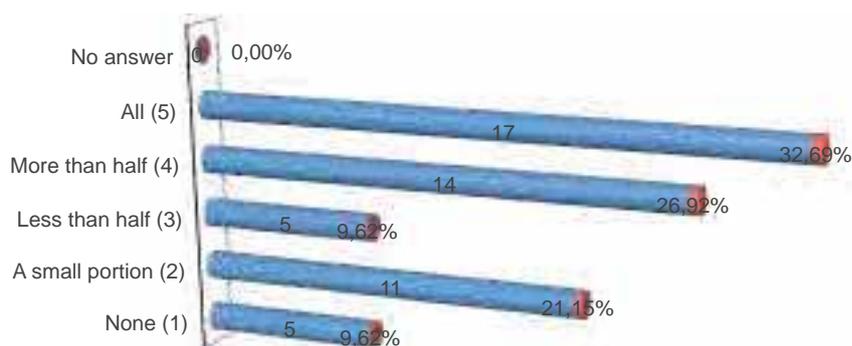
Chart 2: % level of productivity achieved when working while ill



employees surveyed indicated that *all* their work will not be attended to should they be absent, whereas a further 26.9 % indicated that *'more than half'* their work would not be attended to (see Chart 3). Given these

experiences, employees indicated that they would rather report for work when ill despite the fact that their productivity levels may be less than 100%.

Chart 3: Absent due to ill health, % of work to be taken up on return

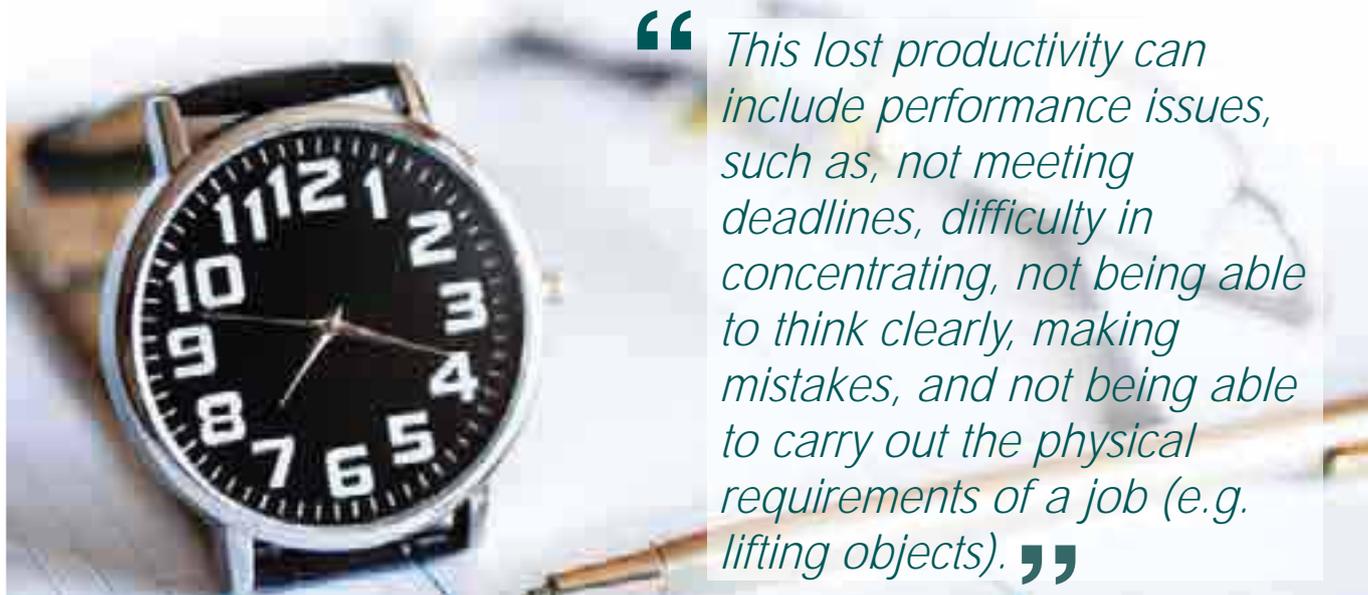


Questions emanating from the research findings

1. Are Public Service departments able to distinguish between *absenteesim*, *presenteesim* and *shirking* in the workplace? And if so, how do they monitor the impact of these phenomena on organisational productivity?
2. What strategies do departments have in place to reduce the contribution of the physical working environment to workplace presenteesim?

3. What strategies do departments have in place to reduce workplace presenteesim resulting from anxieties (worries) employees may experience in the workplace due to their parental responsibilities (e.g. a child care problem)?
4. What strategies do departments have in place to manage the impact of "office politics" on workplace presenteesim?

*For further information on this study, contact Ismail Davids at Ismaild@dpsa.gov.za or Manaseh Tshiguvu at MansehT@dpsa.gov.za



The Whitehall Effect:

How Whitehall Became the Enemy of Great Public Services - and What We Can Do About it

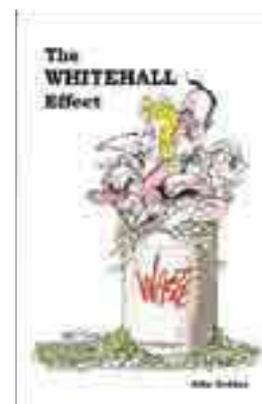
From its ominous title, you could be forgiven for thinking that management guru, John Seddon's latest book (*The Whitehall Effect*) is yet another boilerplate rant against the alleged waste and incompetence of the Public Sector. But to my relief, Seddon avoids the hackneyed approach of unfavourably comparing the Public Sector with the more 'innovative' and 'dynamic' private sector, and instead offers an original diagnosis of the Public Sector's problems, as well as a provocative prescription.

Seddon's central claim is that since the Thatcher era, governments have continuously tried to improve standards in public services while reducing costs, but the claims for actual improvements are often "doubtful" while costly catastrophes have become commonplace. To deal with rising demand, governments have tried outsourcing, setting targets, increasing competition and choice, publishing league tables, using large-scale Information Technology (IT) systems, and seeking economies of scale, to name but a few of the much-vaunted reforms. Most of the time, according to Seddon, this has resulted in higher overall costs, less efficiency, lower staff morale, an expanding Public Sector and poorer quality of services.

Seddon argues that if you concentrate on cutting unit costs while ignoring overall efficiency and performance, overall costs will go up; inspections drive up costs and fail to address variety; targets lead to gaming, perverse incentives and sub-optimal performance, and so on. He admits that much of his thinking is counter-intuitive and hard for the Whitehall establishment to swallow, wedded as it is to these 'improvement' models.

He pulls no punches: the Audit Commission (now effectively abolished), the National Audit Office [Office of the Auditor-General in South Africa] and ministers who seek evidence to support predetermined policies ('spray-on evidence', as civil servants call it) are dismissed for closing their minds to the evidence of failed methods or the possibility of different approaches. Their answers are always to 'plan better'; 'show more leadership'; 'improve performance management systems'. Just bang your head a bit harder!

Interestingly, Seddon is equally scathing about the large-scale private sector providers now earning vast sums from government contracts – Private Finance Initiative [a form of Private, Public Partnerships (PPP)], outsourced services, large call centres, back offices etc. He is particularly critical of commissioning and fragmentation in the National Health System.



Author: John Seddon

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Reviewer: Barry Sheerman, Member of Parliament, United Kingdom

Seddon advocates a very different 'systems thinking' approach that was successfully adopted by Toyota and has been adapted for some services in the public and private sectors. Services should be designed from a thorough knowledge of the demand and not according to predetermined specifications. Instead of debating management philosophies, he invites politicians to go and visit frontline services and ask some simple questions – particularly, how long does it take to resolve a case from beginning to end? This is very different from asking how long it takes to get through to the call centre. He cites examples of local government services – planning, housing services, food safety and others – that have been transformed using the systems thinking approach.

Reading through Seddon's examples of failures, I couldn't help thinking that he might be subject to certain cognitive biases. It is all so negative. What about Whitehall's quiet successes, where money was well spent and better services delivered? These are less likely to be noticed because success is less newsworthy. Newspapers never publish a story saying 'Government scheme performing adequately' or 'Things going roughly as planned'.

Is it possible for politicians to come up with effective, evidence-based policy, which cascades down the civil service and results in better Public Service outcomes? The picture Seddon paints of catastrophic mismanagement leading to terrible and expensive public services does not always chime with my experience. Nevertheless, *The Whitehall Effect* is a lively and stimulating read that warrants the attention of every civil servant, politician and citizen who takes an interest in how our country is run.

* Edited version of the review as it appeared in the www.civilserviceworld.com

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