

A NEW APPROACH TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE SECOND, MORE RADICAL PHASE OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

1. Introduction

As country we have made significant strides in developing and implementing an institutionalized approach to youth development. Since 1996, progressive laws have been passed to foster an enabling environment for youth development. These laws have given rise to institutions that focus on developing effective strategies and programmes for the enlargement of opportunities available to young South Africans. Such laws, institutions, policies, strategies and programmes never existed prior to 1994. Indeed the advent of freedom and democracy ushered in a new era of progressive youth development. A comparative study of the status of the youth that compares the 20 year period between 1976 and 1996 to the subsequent 20 year period of between 1996 and 2016 may need to be undertaken to measure the total value of governments investment in youth development and the consequences of having an institutionalized, democratic approach to youth development post-1996.

Our effective monitoring and evaluation of youth development over the years has arrived at the conclusion that although we have made significant advances in youth development there is a need to review the current policy and legislative landscape to ensure that the effectiveness and efficacy of our interventions are indeed making a sustainable impact on the lives of young people. The enactment of the National Youth Development Agency Act 54 of 2008 by Parliament led to the merger of the National Youth Commission and Umsobomvu Youth Fund into the National Youth Development Agency or NYDA. The main aim of this amalgamation was to address the challenges of fragmentation, duplication and sustainability in youth development. Indeed much progress has been made in creating and promoting coordination in youth development since the establishment of the NYDA.

The ability of the NYDA to synergize policy with implementation has yielded greater results in meaningful and sustainable youth development. The enactment of the NYDA Act 54 of 2008 and establishment of the NYDA as a direct consequence of the Integrated Youth Development Strategy adopted by the Youth Indaba in 2006, placed youth development in South Africa onto a positive trajectory. However, demand continues to outpace supply with the current youth population standing at just more than 21.7 million of which approximately 7.5 million youth are out of school or out of work.¹ This ever growing youth population requires an enabling environment and sustainable support programmes in order for the country to reap the demographic dividends of having a larger working-age youth population as opposed to a smaller dependent-age population.

South Africa is one of the few countries in Africa with a comprehensive national youth policy. We have also signed the African Youth Charter as a framework for the creation of supportive policies and programmes for young people and a platform for youth to assert their rights and fulfill their responsibilities. The African Youth Charter has created a framework for governments to develop supportive policies and programmes for young people in a number of areas that include, amongst others, employment, sustainable livelihoods, education, health, peace and security and youth participation. The national youth policy itself was developed for the period 2009 – 2014 and a review

¹ StatsSA Special Profile

is needed to ensure that the ever-changing youth needs, interests and aspirations find expression in the policy landscape. However, the policy requires appropriate strategies and programmes to implement it.

The aim of this paper is to argue that while much progress has been achieved since 1996, a new approach that is mass-based and focused targeting unemployed youth, youth from poor households and youth in rural areas is the next phase of youth development most appropriate for a second, more radical phase of the national democratic revolution (NDR). The focus of youth development in the second, more radical phase of the NDR should be on education and skills development, youth entrepreneurship and cooperatives development as well as social mobilization - all of which are the key drivers of accelerated job creation for young South Africans. We argue that more needs to be done to foster a culture of youth entrepreneurship and cooperatives development in order to develop youth who are job-creators and not simply job seekers. As part of making education fashionable, a culture of academic excellence and increased access to education for youth from poor households and youth in rural areas must be prioritized in the new approach.

Finally, we stress the importance of social mobilization and the need to institutionalize, mainstream and massify youth service in the second, more radical phase of the NDR. The greatest challenge confronting the youth movement today is that of youth unemployment. We therefore argue that the strategic objective of a new approach to youth development should be accelerated job creation for youth in the second, more radical phase of the transition. The new approach to youth development should inform the review of the national youth policy, the review of the integrated youth development strategy and the development of a long term youth employment plan as a blueprint for accelerated job creation.

2. Youth Context

Youth constitute approximately 42% of the total population in South Africa and the youth population is growing at a faster rate than the adult population. However, many young people find themselves in abject poverty associated with weak endowments of human, capital and financial resources such as low levels of education, few marketable skills, low productivity and generally poor health. Many young people are trapped into a culture of entitlement and dependency turning to alcohol and drugs or a life of crime as an easy way out. On the other extreme are those who are at forefront of transformation taking the opportunities that come with freedom and democracy. These are young people taking ownership of their own personal development and breaking free from poverty through their own leadership and will-power. Thus the youth context is one of two extremes: those who can and those who cannot.

In terms of youth unemployment, about 25.2% of South Africans are unemployed as per the narrow definition and of the total unemployed approximately 72% are youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years. About 2.2 million of the labour force is discouraged from looking for a job and of the total discouraged job seekers approximately 1.3 million are youth. Unemployment is at its highest between the ages of 15 and 24 years.²

² Stats SA

Approximately 7.5 million youth between the ages of 14 and 35 are not employed and not in any learning institution. However, not all is doom and gloom as more than half of the working age population are youth with approximately 6.1 million youth having some form of employment. However, young people remain the most affected by unemployment. Unemployment has shown to be a key factor that contributes to poverty and inequalities in South Africa. Salaries are the main source of income for youth with 73% of youth between 25 and 34 years deriving their income from salaries. This seems to underscore the importance of employment as a source of livelihood amongst young people and one of the motivating factors for a new approach to youth development with the strategic objective of accelerated job creation.

Studies show that the quality and level of education are directly proportional to employability. Young people with only primary education or with only some secondary education are the most affected by unemployment. Approximately 38.3% of young people with Matric as their highest qualification are unemployed whereas 54.8% of young people with an education level less than Matric are unemployed.

The majority of youth in South Africa demonstrated a disturbingly low proficiency in key skills such as numeracy and literacy. South Africa came 10th out of 15 countries in Southern Africa in reading and 8th in mathematics, this despite the fact that we spend more resources on education than any of the 15 countries surveyed. Poor youth in South Africa are performing worse than equally poor youth in other countries in the region. However, millions of young people continue to access no fee schools receiving free education and more young South Africans are accessing higher education than ever before using state support. In 2013/2014, 416 174 young people received loans and bursaries to a total value of R8.7 billion to study in a higher institution of learning through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme or NSFAS. It is estimated that the country needs 40 000 skilled artisans but we are currently only producing an average of 13 000.

Vital statistics from Stats SA show that there is a very high mortality rate amongst youth. The mortality data between 1997 and 2009 shows that there were over 6 million reported deaths in South Africa and of these approximately 1.5 million were youth between the ages of 15 and 35.³ The top five leading causes of death amongst the youth are Tuberculosis, accidental injuries, influenza and pneumonia, HIV and intestinal infections.

3. Defining Youth and Youth Development

The term *youth* or *young people* has different meanings depending on the context. One meaning is based on a sociological definition of youth as a life stage comprising of a series of “transitions from adolescence to adulthood, from dependence to independence, and from being recipients of society’s services to becoming contributors to national, economic, political and cultural life.” (Curtain, 2003: 74) For the purposes of statistical comparisons, however, international organizations such as the United Nations define youth as those aged between 15 and 24 years. The African Union and the African Youth Charter in particular defines youth as individuals aged between 15 to 35 years.

According to Karen Pittman, 1993, development is a process and not a goal and *youth development* is “the ongoing growth process in which youth are engaged in attempting to: (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually

³ Stats SA

grounded, and (2) build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives.” (Pittman, 1993: 8) The National Youth Policy of South Africa 2009 – 2014 defines youth development as: *an intentional, comprehensive approach that provides space, opportunities and support for young people to maximize their individual and collective creative energies for personal development as well as development of the broader society of which they are an integral part.* In the context of South Africa and most other developing countries, development has taken a new shape to incorporate sustainable livelihoods. It is therefore argued that personal development and national development should incorporate aspects of sustainable livelihoods and the necessary interventions to facilitate sustainability.

For the purposes of this paper *youth* or *young people* shall refer to every person between the age of 15 and 35 years and *youth development* shall be defined as: *an intentional, comprehensive approach that provides space, opportunities and support for young people to maximize their individual and collective creative energies for personal development, national development and sustainable livelihoods.*

4. A New Approach

The current national youth policy for 2009 – 2014 disaggregates youth development into six measurable components that being education, economic participation, health and well-being, social cohesion and civic participation, national youth service and youth work. This broad, disaggregated approach has assisted in making significant advances but there remains a number of shortcomings associated with such an approach. With the current youth context placing greater emphasis on youth unemployment and the need for accelerated job creation as the apex priority, it therefore becomes necessary to review and align the approach to youth development with the current context. The unintended danger of failing to do so may lead to a misalignment between policy, legislation and programmes with needs, interests and aspirations. Thus a new, focused and aggregated approach to youth development may need to be discussed for addressing the apex priority of job creation for youth.

The second phase in our transition from apartheid colonialism to a national democratic society and ultimately a socialist society is characterized by that of radical policies and decisive action to effect economic transformation and democratic consolidation. This therefore calls for a review of the national youth policy and integrated youth development strategy under the guiding principles of socio-economic transformation, nation – building and social cohesion with more radical strategies and programmes. A focused approach with radical policies and decisive action should be underpinned by certain key principles and pillars.

We argue that the new approach to youth development should constitute three key pillars namely: (1) Education and Skills Development, (2) Youth Entrepreneurship and Cooperatives Development, and (3) Social Mobilization. The integration of these three pillars shall constitute a focused approach to ensuring a more educated, employed and empowered youth.

5. Education and Skills Development

Education is arguably the single most important investment to make as a country if we are serious about job creation and sustainable development. However, education must be treated as an ideology and not as a neutral phenomenon. During the dark days of Apartheid we have seen how education

was used as an instrument of oppression and it was only after 1994 that we initiated the process of opening the doors of learning for all and the use of education as an instrument of liberation. As a pillar of the new approach to youth development in the second, more radical phase of the NDR, education must continue to be used as an instrument of liberation through the provision of free, quality and relevant education up to the undergraduate level. Education today is a basic need and we must intensify the implementation of free, quality and relevant education for all.

As a country we spend a staggering R254 billion for education and training. This represents the largest portion of government spending allotted to any particular intervention. While some countries continue to spend more on state security we can proudly say that our country would rather spend more on educating and training its people. The majority of those who stand to benefit from such a massive investment in education are of course the more than 21.7 million youth of South Africa. One cannot deny the high premium placed on education and training by the state. However, greater reflection should be made on the culture of quality and excellence in education or the lack thereof if we are to talk about sustainable development. Of equal importance is infrastructure development. More schools need to be built for the poor and rural youth and new classrooms erected in existing schools. Infrastructure development in the education system cannot be over-emphasized if we are to talk about quality, relevant education.

The Youth Employment Accord signed in April 2013 makes a number of commitments for job creation but commitment number one remains that of education and skills development. The Accord places emphasis on the need for second chance programmes for those who have not passed their matric exams or have obtained poor results. It also recommends expanding the intake of FET colleges, developing stronger roles for Sector Education and Training Authorities or SETAs and expanding the targets in the National Skills Accord and including for State-owned entities. The Youth Employment Accord must be supported as a broad-based collective agreement that links skills development to job creation and assists with the coordination of efforts aimed at job creation through education and skills development.

Institutions established to provide support such as the NYDA, NSFAS and National Skills Fund or NSF should work in a more integrated way to provide more bursaries and scholarships for youth. In this way duplication can be avoided and resources maximized to ensure that supply catches up with demand.

The shortage of professionals and artisans calls for more efforts at accelerated skills development. The country is experiencing a shortage of professionals such as pharmacists and social workers. Only 0.01% of our total population are pharmacists and this is far below the averages of other developing states. The country has also not increased the production of doctors and veterinary scientists due to inadequate facilities. Artisan production is far below the anticipated 40 000 required as per the National Development Plan and we continue to import scarce skills such as coded welders and plumbers.

Free, quality, relevant education and accelerated skills development should constitute the first pillar of a new approach to youth development.

6. Youth Entrepreneurship and Cooperatives Development

There is a need to focus on youth entrepreneurship and cooperatives development in the new approach to youth development. Over time we have made significant strides in facilitating an enabling policy and legislative environment for young entrepreneurs combined with some of the best financial and non-financial support programmes in the world. To address some of the major socio-economic challenges we face as a country such as job creation and poverty alleviation requires a larger cohort of successful young entrepreneurs. This is simply because entrepreneurs create new enterprises, new enterprises create more jobs and more jobs leads to more household income. The harsh reality is that as a nation we lack a culture of youth entrepreneurship and we simply have too few young entrepreneurs capable of creating jobs for other young people.

The shortage of young entrepreneurs and the lack of a culture of entrepreneurship amongst the youth of South Africa is unfortunately supported by facts. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor or GEM Report for 2013 indicated that only 13% of young South Africans had intentions of starting an enterprise. This represented a decline from 15% in 2012 and a shocking statistic when compared to the region's average of approximately 47%. The report further indicated that the total early stage entrepreneurial activity rate or TEA rate amongst youth in South Africa was only 10.6% while other countries on the continent such as Nigeria, Malawi, Zambia and Ghana all had TEA rates of above 30%. The TEA rate accounted for the percentage of youth in the process of establishing new enterprises or running existing enterprises that are less than three and half years old. Only 2.9% of South Africa's population have firmly established small enterprises, the fourth lowest established enterprise activity rate and well below the average rate of 15.4% in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Clearly we need to do more for youth entrepreneurship in South Africa. Similar sentiments have been echoed by various captains of industry and community leaders that indeed we simply do not have enough young entrepreneurs and more needs to be done to encourage young South Africans to become entrepreneurs. This challenge presents itself against the backdrop of a value system that is skewed towards producing job seekers rather than job creators. Yet many young South Africans possess high degrees of entrepreneurial talent and can easily be groomed into successful young entrepreneurs.

The availability of financial and non-financial support for young entrepreneurs has increased exponentially over time and today the NYDA, SEFA and IDC partnership that provides loans, business development support and mentorship for youth – owned enterprises is one of the largest state support programmes in existence. A staggering R2.7 billion has been allocated specifically to support aspiring young entrepreneurs.

Another example is the NYDA Youth Entrepreneurship Grant Programme that provides grant finance, business development support and mentorship to micro and small youth – owned enterprises in order to nurture a small business culture amongst the youth. Clearly the availability of support is not an issue. A plethora of financial and non-financial support exists for those young South Africans who want to become entrepreneurs. The major challenge seems to be a lack of information on how best to access this support. The new approach to youth development in the second, more radical phase of the NDR should promote more access to information on youth entrepreneurship for unemployed youth, youth from poor households and youth in rural areas.

Efforts at promoting a culture of youth entrepreneurship should be complemented with further efforts at intensifying the participation of young people in the cooperatives economy. It is important to acknowledge and share the important role that cooperatives as a form of enterprise can play in

addressing major socio – economic challenges such as job creation, poverty alleviation and social integration. Many countries have promoted the formation and growth of cooperatives as a means to address unemployment. Cooperatives worldwide have created more than 800 million jobs. They create jobs because members are allowed to pool resources, ideas and capital for collective growth and prosperity. Cooperatives therefore have a distinct employment creating potential that differs from other forms of enterprise. Cooperatives can provide decent work opportunities because they allow members to determine for themselves under which conditions they wish to work. This is of course the extreme opposite of exploitation of one by another as experienced under capitalist orientated forms of enterprise. Thus cooperatives provide a viable option for decent job creation and the realization of a living wage.

In order to effect sustainable socio-economic growth and transformation, we must provide youth with alternatives to enter into the mainstream economy. Youth entrepreneurship and cooperatives development are critical vehicles through which this can be achieved.

7. Social Mobilization

Social mobilization as a strategy for youth development and national development is critical in ensuring a mass-based approach to youth development and the active participation of young people in their own development. Efforts at social mobilization can play a critical role in nation building and social cohesion. Bridges of social capital underpinned by values of peace, trust and equality can easily be constructed if social mobilization constitutes a key pillar to the new approach for youth development. In the second, more radical phase of the NDR, a social mobilization strategy must target unemployed youth, youth from poor households and youth in rural areas. These vulnerable groups of young people have largely been excluded from the gains made in the first phase of the transition post 1994. It therefore becomes important to ensure that they are prioritized in the second phase.

The cornerstone of a social mobilization strategy is that of youth service. The current National Youth Service (NYS) programme constitutes part and parcel of the NYDA's basket of goods, services and programmes offered to young people. There are approximately 13 000 young people on the National Youth Service programme of the NYDA. However, this is insignificant in the context of 7.5 million youth being out of school and out of work. These 7.5 million young people constitute those who are capable and of a productive age yet idle seeking opportunities that are scarce. It is therefore imperative to re-image, re-package and upscale the National Youth Service.

Many countries in the world have made use of their national youth service programmes to build decent houses, fight HIV/AIDS and improve literacy. Youth service programmes provide an opportunity for youth to address what they deem wrong in their communities whilst gaining valuable skills, assuming responsibility, learning work ethic and interpersonal skills. Through volunteering, youth become part of national solutions and are able to identify strategies to alleviate problems in their communities.

Youth service is often defined as a range of activities that enable young people to participate in civic life to benefit themselves and their communities. The range of youth service programmes can span from formal service through structured programmes in exchange for minimal or no monetary

contribution to informal service which is often the result of an ethic of service to others that is passed on through families, schools, civic organizations and popular culture. Fundamentally youth service is about ensuring that young people are at the forefront of promoting development in their communities.

Youth should not be viewed as victims or problems to society but rather as important assets in promoting development and delivering services. Investing in programmes that promote youth service can have many returns. National Youth Service is therefore an effective strategy for youth development and a critical part of social mobilization. In the past we have often debated about whether to legislate the National Youth Service or not.

However a better option may in fact be to mainstream youth service into all aspects of society so that all government departments, the private sector, labour organizations and community organizations start to think more about developing and implementing youth service programmes that coincide with their day to day work. Mainstreaming youth service is critical to the country's development agenda and therefore every government department should develop and implement a national youth service programme.

Mainstreaming youth service offers many returns to the individual, the community and society as a whole. One of the most important advantages is the returns to the individual in the form of gaining valuable experience, knowledge and skills that will facilitate the transition into paid employment. In this way being part of a youth service programme can improve a young person's ability to successfully make the transition from school to work. Whether acquiring skills through on-the-job training that will serve them in their future career, or simply acclimatizing to a workplace environment, service can help young people be absorbed into the open labour market.

Thus youth service programmes not only assist in increasing youth employment but enhance the overall employability of youth. Youth service also provides constructive alternatives to risky behaviour and can provide a means for re-integrating out-of-school and unemployed youth. These youth groups are at a much greater risk of behaviour that is harmful to themselves and their communities. A sense of hopelessness from being out of school or out of work leads many young people into a life of crime, social unrest or alcohol and drug abuse. Youth service programmes provide a structured environment in which to learn and work while reducing the space and time to think about risky behaviour.

Participating in youth service programmes empowers young people to become active citizens in addressing a wide range of community needs. Many young people are actively involved in cleaning up their communities, tutoring and mentorship or particular forms of social work. This helps in positioning young people as active agents for community development as opposed to being viewed as passive recipients or being part of the problem. Youth service programmes can also serve as a cost-effective tool for addressing a wide range of development priorities. With limited budgets and staff, youth service programmes can be used to mobilize and organize young people to build infrastructure, fight HIV/AIDS, improve literacy rates and facilitate green economy interventions for protecting the environment. While at a societal level the mainstreaming of youth service can reduce the economic and social cost of risky behaviour and build the necessary social capital required for nation building. Ensuring that we take decisive measures to mainstream youth service can have significant returns to the development of our local communities and society as a whole.

More needs to be done in coordinating and mainstreaming youth service as the cornerstone of social mobilization. The institutionalization and massification of youth service in the second, more radical

phase of the NDR must constitute a key pillar of the new, more focused approach to youth development.

8. Conclusion

There is a need to take advantage of the demographic dividend that presents itself to the country as a result of having a larger, working age youth population. To achieve this, a number of strategies need to be put in place within an integrated youth development framework. Hence the review of the Integrated Youth Development Strategy is of critical importance to determine what will constitute the priority strategic interventions for youth development in the second phase of the NDR. The integrated youth development framework must seek to engage young people in their own right – not as either adults or children – but as individuals with their own strengths, talents, energies and challenges. It is suggested that a new approach to youth development be considered cognizant of the dynamic and organic nature of the youth movement. Youth constitute that largest segment of our population but are most affected by unemployment. Unemployment itself is key factor that contributes to deepening poverty and rising inequality.

It is therefore imperative to develop a more focused, aggregated approach to youth development with the strategic objective of accelerated job creation for youth. Certain key principles must be considered in framing this approach. This may include socio-economic transformation, nation – building, social cohesion and equality. Building on these principles one can identify strategic priority areas that may lead to accelerated job creation for youth.

First and foremost is the provision of free, quality, relevant education and accelerated skills development. Studies show that the quality and level of education are directly proportional to employability. Secondly is the need to foster a culture of youth entrepreneurship and intensify cooperatives development. This is premised on the notion that entrepreneurs create new enterprises, new enterprises create more jobs and more jobs leads to more household income and sustainable livelihoods. Thirdly is the institutionalization and massification of youth service as the cornerstone of social mobilization strategy. Youth service can improve a young person's ability to successfully make the transition from school to work thus ensuring their uptake into the mainstream economy.

The expectation is that a new approach to youth development should necessitate a review of the national youth policy and a review of the integrated youth development strategy. It should also lead to the development of a comprehensive Youth Employment Plan as a blueprint for accelerated job creation as the apex priority of our current conjuncture.