

COSATU Comments on Draft National Youth Policy

February 2015



## **Introduction**

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) welcomes the publication of this draft policy. South Africa faces a number of socioeconomic challenges, which have had adverse effects on most citizens. Growth in the post-apartheid era has not been equitable. It has produced positive outcomes for a small portion of the population. Most South Africans have been confronted by the perverse interrelated challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. This observation applies specifically to the youth, which constitutes a large section of the poor and unemployed. The Presidency has attempted to respond to this challenge—popularly referred to as the youth bulge<sup>1</sup>— by drafting a *National Draft Youth Policy (2014)*. This short brief will outline COSATU's comments on the proposals and analysis contained in the document. Our input will be based on general observations relating to youth development. The organization will provide a comprehensive submission at a later stage of the legislative process.

### **1. South African Context**

As stated above, most citizens in the country are experiencing the hardships produced by the inequitable post-apartheid growth path. The Presidency's Twenty Year Review explains this trend by stating that: *South Africa remains one of the most inequitable countries in the world. When using the Gini coefficient measurement, inequality increased from 0.64 in 1995 to 0.69 in 2005, but improved to 0.65 in 2010*" (Presidency 2014:42).

It should be noted that this figure is way above the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average of 0.32 ( OECD 2011)<sup>2</sup>. More worryingly, our country's inequality is accompanied by glaring class and race divisions. COSATU (2010) illustrated this in its *Growth Path Towards Full Employment* document, which cited that the average income for African males is R 2400 a month; whilst their white counterparts earn R 19 000. This unequal wage structure is also prevalent amongst the female labour force (COSATU 2010). These high levels of inequality are not confined to income differentials. They can also be observed in health, education and housing. The primary driver of this phenomenon is the untransformed structure of the nation's economy. Thus, low levels of youth development must be understood within this broader context of SA's developmental impasse, which is characterized by high levels of poverty and inequality.

The comments are divided into the following sections: (a) Structure and Methodology (b) Brief Response to the Proposed Interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> young adult population is growing at a rate faster than the rate at which the economy is able to generate sufficient job opportunities

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2011) members and partners inequality comparison

## **2. Structure and Methodology**

The first observation is related to the conceptualization of the youth. This document presents the youth as a homogeneous group or strata in society. It does not appreciate the stratification of young people along class and racial lines sufficiently. This is very important in the South African context, as the country has a peculiar youth development challenge. Most research acknowledges the racial and class based character of the nation's inequality. Thus, any policy intervention must be informed by an approach that appreciates this social stratification. This holistic view is essential for ensuring that the policy proposals are applicable to the nuances of the socio-economic context. For example, the educational challenges experienced by African working class youth will not necessarily be the same as those experienced by youth from affluent backgrounds. The document contains a section that highlights the need for differentiation. However, the sections that follow do not apply this analytical principle.

Another methodological shortfall of the draft policy paper is the minimal reference to international experience. It does cite some information on global youth unemployment trends; but it is very limited. Most of the reference to international experience describes elements of the *youth bulge* and international policy frameworks. In our view, the paper should have drawn some key policy lessons from specific countries, with low youth unemployment and successful human development strategies. This will provide policy drafters with a concrete basis for comparative analysis and international best practice. The experiences of Germany can provide some valuable insights (especially on education and skills development). Germany's youth unemployment rate in 2011 was 8.5 per cent, which was below the EU average of 22.8 (Crowley et al 2013).

The policy does not discuss the relationship between social security and youth development. It just mentions that young able-bodied citizens —without children— fall outside the current system of social security. This omission is significant, because a number of studies have proven that access to comprehensive social security decreases poverty. Countries like Brazil have managed to decrease their levels of youth poverty and unemployment using social security policy instruments. Thus, it is essential to include social security as one of the key elements within the youth development policy discussion. The exclusion of this element indicates that policy drafters have adopted a narrow definition of empowerment. It is purely understood within the confines of individualism, which suggest that empowered youth's development is not linked to social solidarity. This methodological paradigm is definitely not suited for one of the world's most unequal societies.

The fourth concern regarding the methodology is the insufficient analysis of state youth agencies. The section on state machinery is very descriptive, and does not provide any deep insights into the underlying challenges facing state agencies. Furthermore, the assertions made on this topic are anecdotal and not supported by evidence. This shortfall indicates that there should be a more in-depth analysis conducted on the linkage between youth policy implementation, and state institutional functioning. The analysis must not only focus on coordination; but other areas related to the developmental role that the institutions should play. For example, it could attempt to answer the following pertinent questions: are these institutions programmes integrated with provincial growth strategies (specifically those related to youth employment)? Have the institutional linkages between these agencies and National Education Departments produced positive outcomes? Is the research being conducted by these agencies valuable for enhancing youth employment and participation in various sectors? Lastly, what is the nature of the networks established by these organs and civil society?

### **3. Response to the Proposed Interventions.**

#### **3.1 Economic participation:**

##### **3.1.2 Youth Employment and Incentives**

The paper correctly notes that: "*The Quarter 4 Labour Force Survey in 2014 reflects the youth unemployment rate as 67.4% , with young women more adversely affected than young men. The unemployment figure is widely seen as being based on a narrow definition of unemployment, as it excludes those youth who are discouraged and have given up looking for work*". This figure is quite alarming and it amounts to more than double the size of the general unemployment rate in South Africa (Ranchod & Finn 2014; National Treasury 2011). The youth constitutes 72 % of the unemployed in our country (COSATU 2012).

The *Draft Youth Policy* captures this chronic problem of youth unemployment. However, it does not discuss the phenomenon of underemployment. In 2012 the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that 30 % of young workers earned less than \$ 2 a day. The median wage rate for South African young workers (15-24) in 2010 was R 2100; significantly lower than the other cohorts (Stats SA 2010). More worryingly, the number of young people employed on permanent basis declined from 53, 6% 2008 to 21, 6% in 2014(Stats SA 2014). This phenomenon is exacerbated by the increased restructuring of work in the post-apartheid era, with the growth of precarious and atypical forms of employment (Buhlungu 2010).

The evidence cited above illustrates that the discussion on youth employment should be widened. It must not be confined to mass employment creation as stated in the

NDP. Policy drafters must take into account the need to create decent work for young people, which will alleviate poverty and inequality. Moreover, it questions the argument that hiring young workers is too expensive. The longitudinal study (2008-2014) conducted by Stats SA (2014) on the national youth labour force clearly proves that most young people are in precarious forms of work.

It is within this context that we reject the proposal of using measures such as Youth Employment Taxes or Subsidies to address the challenge of creating employment. This position is based on the following grounds. First, the primary reason for introducing this policy intervention is flawed. Proponents have argued that hiring young workers in SA is too costly. However, labour market studies — both domestic and international— prove that most young workers are in low-paying vulnerable jobs (ILO 2012; Stats SA 2010; Stats SA 2014). Moreover, the correlation between high wages and unemployment has not been substantiated. The share of wages in the national income has declined since 1994, but the unemployment figures remain high.

Secondly, these incentives have the potential to exacerbate the challenge of youth employment insecurity. This will be caused by the *revolving door* phenomenon, where subsidised young workers replace existing youth employees when the subsidy ends. This point is related to the fundamental argument we made earlier on how the document conceptualizes employment. As stated above, all policy measures must seek to create decent employment for young people. It is not sufficient to increase short-term precarious employment. This will exacerbate the prevalence of poverty and inequality amongst the youth in the long-run.

Thirdly, there is insufficient evidence to prove that these incentives create employment. The Draft Policy states that: "*The recently launched Employment Tax should go a long way to encourage private sector employment of new entrants to the labour market. Preliminary figures indicate that over 100 000 young people have benefitted from the scheme.*" This assertion is not backed up by any evidence, and does not describe the nature of these jobs. It also fails to assess the effects of the tax on existing jobs. In fact, a recent study conducted by Ranchod & Finn (2014) — for the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit— proves that there was no correlation between the implementation of this policy and youth employment creation. The authors argue that the jobs would have been created by enterprises in the absence of this policy.

Fourthly, Van Rensburg (2014) and others have highlighted that the tax incentive has been mainly absorbed by labour brokers. Companies such as Adcorp have accumulated huge amounts of profit since the introduction of the policy. As Van Rensburg (2014) explains: "*Adcorp had already made R7 million from the scheme, which it accounted for as part of other income*". This contradicts the

primary purpose of the policy, which is supposed to lower the employment costs for employers. Current trends indicate that intermediaries — which perpetuate underemployment— are the main beneficiaries. This is worrisome if one considers that the government has allocated R 5 billion to the scheme. The absorption of the funds by labour brokers is another indication of the failure of these interventions.

In sum, the challenge of unemployment must be broadened. It needs to incorporate a discussion on creating decent work for young people. This is crucial for addressing the challenges of poverty and inequality. Furthermore, it is also essential to examine the nature of policy measures used to enhance youth employment. The failure of the above-mentioned incentives is primarily informed by an incorrect analysis of the causes of unemployment in the country. South Africa's youth unemployment problem is not solely caused by the costs associated with hiring young citizens. It is driven by the following deeper structural challenges: (a) structure of the post-apartheid political economy (capital intensive; resource-based; non-productive sector expansion); (b) South Africa's weak human resource strategy (c) Weak education system (d) Minimalist role of the state in the economy. Thus, proposed policy interventions— including incentives— should address these root causes.

Moreover, in 2011 a billion Jobs fund was established. It aimed to create 150 000 jobs over three years by targeting 1000 to 2000 projects. Not much is reported as to where and how many jobs have been created so far since its creation. A R10 billion Gro-E scheme was also launched in 2011 to facilitate job creation. But there is no account on the progress.

### **3.2 Public Employment Programme and Youth Development**

The Draft Policy document identifies the Expanded Public and Community Works Programmes as key instruments for youth employment creation. This commitment of using state resources and programmes to assist young unemployed people is welcome. However, COSATU wishes to raise the following concerns regarding the Public Employment Programme (PEP) in SA.

The first is related to the confusion about the policy goals of the PEP. Both the NDP and National Youth Draft Policy use the terms employment and work opportunities synonymously. This presents a huge problem for policy analysis and evaluation. It does not provide a clear description of what the primary purpose of the PEP is. Some senior government officials and principals use work opportunity figures in discussions on employment creation. This is problematic, because government has argued that the PEP in SA is mainly meant to provide beneficiaries with stipends for poverty alleviation. The corollary of this argument is that a PEP opportunity should not be perceived as standard employment; but a form of social security. If the drafters of

this policy follow the same logic, then the PEP should be discussed as a form of social security rather than a form of employment.

The second observation is related to the outcomes of the training obtained in the programme. Most researchers concur that the training is insufficient, and does not provide beneficiaries with skills for long-term economic participation. It is only conducted for a short period (average of 8-12 days), and is mainly based on life or project-related skills (Mc Cord 2005; Meth 2011; Samson 2007). This is an important concern, because the Draft Policy places emphasis on the poor skill capabilities of young citizens in SA. The development of a skilled young population is crucial for alleviating unemployment amongst young citizens. Current PEPs do not provide workers with the required skills.

Thirdly, the PEP in SA has had minimal success in assisting beneficiaries to access formal employment. Most estimates indicate that 2-3 % of the participants find formal employment after having worked on the programme (Moyo 2013). This is related to a number of deeper structural factors. The first is that SA has a structural unemployment problem, related to the nature of demand in the economy (Samson 2007). In other words, it is not valid to argue that supply-side measures (skills etc) are the panacea for youth unemployment. Another reason for low rates of employability is the poor quality of training and skills development in the PEP. Mc Cord (2005) also notes that a number of participants did not receive the required training.

The fourth point is related to the conceptualization of employment. As argued in previous sections, the discourse on youth employment must incorporate the need to create decent work. In our view, decent work is crucial for addressing the triple interrelated socio-economic challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. The current PEP in South Africa is creating two-tiered labour system. Workers in the programme receive very low wages (R71), and are exempted from conventional labour legislation. Moreover, the violation of the ministerial sectoral determination is prevalent in the programme (Mc Cord 2005; Moyo 2013). For example, in the PEP NEDLAC tripartite discussion COSATU (2014) reported the following wage violations in three provinces:

- Limpopo education department where 4,000 projects produced an average daily wage of R34.28
- Limpopo safety and security department R30 per day
- Gauteng 900 work opportunities produced and average daily wage of R30
- Social Development in the Western Cape had a daily rate of R56

The above-mentioned observations illustrate that there needs to be a review of the PEP. This process should incorporate the peculiar challenges facing young people in the country, particularly those related to skills development and long term

employment security. The point of departure in this discussion should be on the nature of the PEP, and the policy goals it seeks to achieve. If the intended outcome is to provide social security, then policy-makers need to include it in the upcoming discussions on developing a comprehensive social security system. This discussion should consider the following policy options: (a) Basic Income Grant (able-bodied young people) (b) developing an Employment Guarantee Scheme (c) Integrating youth development strategy into comprehensive social security policy.

### **3.3. Youth, Experience and Job Placement**

We welcome the proposed interventions to enhance the youth's levels of work experience, and assist them to find employment. The *Draft Policy* outlines a number of initiatives to be undertaken by government institutions to support job seekers. It is evident the Department of Labour (DOL) will lead this process. The successful implementation of the interventions will also depend on the institutional capacity of the employment services unit in the DOL. Thus, we propose that government enhances the financial and institutional capacity of this branch. Additionally, this division should establish productive links with other departments and social partners. This has been has produced successful results in Germany. As Crowley et al (2013:20) explain: *"A key strength of the German dual apprenticeship system is the high level of engagement amongst employers and other social partners (trade unions, chambers of commerce etc.) at national, regional, sector and company levels.*

However, the document is silent on the expansion of the private employment service sector. This trend is one of the main causes of underemployment in SA. Vulnerable job seekers—especially the youth— are continuously exploited by private employment service enterprises. COSATU wishes to reiterate its position on banning labour brokers. This is consistent with our view that young people face the twin challenges of un and under employment. The proposed policy interventions on job placement initiatives should put in places measures to curb this practice. More importantly, no state subsidies should be used to support the expansion of this industry. Entities such Adcorp continue to generate large amounts of profit by exploiting young vulnerable workers. Thus, it would be unjust to use public funds to support this exploitation.

### **3.4 Youth Development Finance**

We note that the Industrial Development Corporation has pledged R16 billion in 2014 towards Youth Enterprise funding especially as part of Youth Employment Accord. R61 million was approved to support businesses with more than 50% youth-owned shares to create 23850 jobs. A further R44 million was approved for 4 businesses with youth shareholding of between 25%-50% to create 429 job

opportunities. What is important is their function and whether these have produced the desired output? We think policy should not devise more than sufficient instruments but with so many tools, rather it should monitor and evaluate the efficacy of existing programmes.

## **4 Education and Skills**

### **4.1 Basic Education**

We agree with the following proposals: improving performance in maths and literacy; enhancing coordination across the system; emphasis on learners with special needs; implementing mechanisms to drastically decrease premature exit. However, it is important to raise some points, which do not find sufficient expression in the policy proposals.

First, the quality of education is poor; but there are deeper structural socio-economic problems that need to be addressed in conjunction with improving the qualitative aspects of the system. These are inherently related to the challenges of the post-apartheid political economy, which is characterized by racialised poverty, inequality and unemployment.

The Draft Policy document correctly notes that the matric results have been improving, reaching a figure of 73.9% in 2012. However, a deeper analysis reveals that 70% of matriculation passes were produced by 11% of schools in the system. These are affluent schools in predominantly White, Indian and Coloured areas. Additionally, schools with lower fees performed poorly; whilst high-fee schools achieved higher pass rates. Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure and poor access to basic services continues to affect educational outcomes. For example, in 2012, 70% of schools didn't have libraries; 42% of schools depended on boreholes; and 60% did not have laboratories (COSATU 2012).

This clearly indicates that the discussion on education needs to take into account the high levels of socio-economic inequality in the system. The Draft Policy paper discusses the skills and education challenges facing the youth generically. It does not appreciate the influence of socio-economic inequalities on educational outcomes. This is a significant omission, because learners can only perform well in an enabling socio-economic context. The policy should have proposed more measures to deal with social infrastructure and basic services bottlenecks in the system. For example, increasing the role of the state in the maintenance and provision of infrastructure for public schools. COSATU's Growth Path (2010) estimated that: ***"extension of computer laboratories and libraries will create in excess of 80 000 direct permanent jobs for librarians and computer teachers"***.

This can further be achieved by limiting the funding of private schools from the national fiscus, so that those funds can be diverted to public schools. The South African government spent R11.35 billion funding Independent Profit Schools. This is based on the findings from the National Treasury report. According to this document, in 2013/14 South Africa spent R227 billion (19.7 per cent of total government expenditure) on education, which is equivalent to 6.5 per cent of GDP.

The government allocated 5% of the education department budget to Independent Profit Schools. As alluded above, 5% of R227 billion equals R11, 35 billion. These funds could have drastically decreased the prevalence of infrastructure backlogs in the basic education system.

In reality, education must be a public good and should not be sold as articulated in article 16 the World Trade Organization. Privatization of education serves to perpetuate two separate systems of education as witnessed under the apartheid regime. This two systems are characterized by the interrelated racial and class inequality observed in all areas of social development.

Second, it is accepted that the drop rates in the system are too high. Over 60% of young people exit the system before completing grade 12. These students are mainly from African working class backgrounds. This trend proves that there is a direct correlation between performance and socio-economic status.

Thus, the paper should have afforded more attention to the expansion of the Early Childhood Development Programme. This is essential for improving the throughput rates in the system of basic education. It will also set a solid foundation for improved performance at the Higher Education and Training levels. More resources and human capital should be channelled to this policy, and working class communities should be prioritized.

Third, many schools have experienced challenges related to the provision of basic educational material and resources. This has a negative impact on the learning process. These challenges are caused by fragmentation and the increased outsourcing within government. In our view, the state should be providing most of these services, because its interventions are not solely driven by profit. More importantly, this will assist the state in achieving its objectives of localization and job creation.

Fourthly, African Indigenous languages must be prioritised for academic development and used as a medium of instruction. Volumes upon volumes of scientific research have proven that learners who have English as 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> language will always be at a disadvantage academically.

Bamgbose (2005) discusses the neglect of African languages, pointing out that the role and vitality of African languages have been eroded due to the impact of colonialism. He argued that not many Africans believe their children could receive meaningful education today in African languages beyond the early years of initial education.

This specifically applies to SA, where most people believe that one is more employable if he or she has high levels of English oral and written skills. The implication is that those who are literate only in an African language are viewed as inferior to those who are proficient in an imported or partner languages (such as English, French, German and Portuguese).

Pupils who use African languages at home are treated differently from the rest of the world, since they are not educated in their first languages (Bamgbose, 2005). The reasons why African languages are not used in postcolonial Africa is that English was often the colonially imposed medium of instruction in schools. Many people also believe that African languages do not have sufficient scientific concepts. However, if truth be told, African languages can cope with the demands required by technology and science, since traditional African concepts about the universe, measurement, medicine and the environment exist. Based on the imposition of colonialism, it is not surprising that wrong judgements are made on the child's intelligence and ability when the fault lies squarely on a premature use as medium of what is best accepted and treated as a second language. Those who drop out and those who fail at the end of primary school now constitute another squad of the excluded.

#### **4.2 Higher Education and Training**

In the early 2000s, the Skill Development Act was passed as a policy measure to equip young entrants – through skills development learnership programmes - into labour market i.e. using the SETA institutional vehicles. It is disappointing to learn that in 2009/10 the participation rate in these programmes is a mere 2.7%. We appreciate the new policy's conviction which aims to raise the rate of participation by youth to 75%.

COSATU also supports the proposal of increasing the number of Technical Vocational and Education Training colleges. This is crucial for ensuring that the 400 000 young people who exit the basic education system access more training. The end result will be a reduction in the labour force, and decreasing the low levels of tertiary qualifications amongst young people. Most estimates suggest that 95% of the unemployed do not have tertiary education. This proves that analyst should focus on access to skills, before engaging on the qualitative aspects of the nation's skills development strategy. Proponents of the *mismatch theory* always place emphasis on poor quality; whilst paying minimal attention to access.

An impediment to the access we mention above is funding. The *Draft Policy* proposes "***progressively introducing free education for poor learners***". It further states that government should mobilize additional funding for young people, who cannot access education because of financial constraints. These statements are positive, because they acknowledge COSATU's argument about addressing the challenge of access in the first place. However, the document is silent on the following factors which need to be addressed to improve access in the system.

First, the mismatch between NSFAS budget allocations and tuition costs cannot be addressed without improved regulation of the fee determination process. Most research illustrates that higher education institutions charge exorbitant prices, which then erode any additional NSFAS allocations. Tuition Fees rose from R7.8-billion in 2000 to R15.5-billion in 2012. This phenomenon is related to a deeper challenge regarding the role of the state in price determination in the sector. In our view, government should enhance its regulatory mechanisms to curb the commercialization of education. The state should consider the introduction of tuition fee caps; a policy instrument has been implemented successfully in India.

Second, "***progressively introducing free education for poor learners***" is going to exacerbate the high drop rates in the system. Studies on low retention rates have identified socio-economic challenges (fees; accommodation) as of the primary causes of premature exist. The incremental introduction of "***free education***" will not address the current challenges faced by thousands of students who are already in the system. This also poses a danger for the policy goals of improving the participation rates in the system. COSATU believes that it is not sufficient to state that free education will be introduced progressively. It is important to develop clear implementation time-lines, and mechanisms to assist those students who are currently facing the challenge of financial exclusion.

Third, the state's expenditure on higher education (as % of GDP) in SA is very low when compared to other middle-income counties. This is very worrisome, because the transformation of higher education is identified as one of the key measures to address youth unemployment. Government should definitely increase its expenditure beyond the current figure of 0.79 % of GDP. Other middle-income countries such as Ghana (1.44%) and India (1.20%) spend more on higher education.

Fourthly, the paper is silent on the question of assisting students from lower middle class families. These students do not qualify because their parents salaries exceed the 150 000 threshold. This gap in the funding policy is similar to one encountered in the housing sector. It is also denies many students access to higher education. It is important to develop some policy mechanisms that can address this challenge. Lessons could be drawn from the state intervention used in the housing sector.

Fifthly, one of the primary cost drivers in the system of higher education is corporatisation. The increased outsourcing and application of corporate governance models at institutions has contributed immensely to high tuition fees. More importantly, it has had negative effects on the quality of teaching. Many institutions cannot retain teaching staff as a result of the prevalence of precarious work. It also drives the institution's policies towards cost-recovery, rather than improving educational outcomes.

In addition to the above, we are of the view that there are so many learning institutions that are under-utilised. These ranges from education and training institutes, arts and culture institutes, music and sporting institutes and other forms of recreational ones that are not put into good use. Funding, skilling, and equipping these institutions could unlock their potential and help absorb a lot of youth roaming the streets of every village, town and suburb, while also preventing them from resorting to substance and drug abuse.

#### **4.3 Technical Vocational and Education Training Colleges: Lessons from Germany**

Most literature acknowledges that Germany has the most successful vocational and training system in the world. The following sections will identify the main lessons that can be drawn from the German experience.

The first is the involvement of all social partners: business, government and trade unions in the development of the system. This is crucial for legitimizing the programmes of the system, and improving implementation. According to Crowley (2013):

*These actors play a key role in both the conceptualisation and provision of training of apprentices, with roles including assisting in the development of training programmes and standards; supporting coordination between schools and enterprise; advising on and supervising training provision in enterprises; implementing examinations and awarding qualifications."*

The second key element of the German system is financial and institutional support. This programme receives a large portion of the state's education and skills development expenditure. Moreover, the programme is integrated into the education departments – both national and federal - programmes. This enhances coordination between education policy development and the trends in the labour market.

The third key lesson is the implementation of a dual apprenticeship model. This system combines conventional education with work-place training. It primarily focuses on the training provided by vocational schools, where most hours are spent

on teaching trade-specific subjects. This means that students are more adequately prepared for entrance into the work place.

## **5. Nation Building & Social Cohesion**

We welcome the fact that the Draft Policy makes reference to National Building & Social Cohesion as a strategic objective for the country. It goes further and accepts that though apartheid no longer exists, the social, psychological and geographic elements of apartheid continue to shape the lives and outlook of many South Africans. It mentions outcomes of the status quo such as racism, xenophobia and discrimination of the grounds of sexuality and homophobic violence.

It is our firm believe that if we are to foster leadership, active citizenry and constitutional values, Basic Education offers us the ideal platform to get the wheels in motion.

Firstly, the South African schools' curriculum remains dominated by a neo-liberal outlook and so is the case in higher education as well. This outlook does not allow for the full exploration of other critical socio-economic concepts, resulting in what can be called a largely one side affair in the battle of ideas.

A free market ideology and individualism remain the dominant schools of thought. Essentially young people are taught from primary upwards that all that they are living and working towards is the life of the good employee. Their minds are constructed towards the attainment of individual goals and serving the master (those that own the means of production) faithfully. Deliberately, the education system does not prioritise putting the country before one self and the perhaps entrepreneurship through innovation.

Another policy intervention to consider is the compulsory teaching of South African history. South Africa lags behind other countries in terms of robust teaching of History as a subject that can help celebrate the heritage, culture and values that made South Africa as known today.

Instead it has to rely in fragmented teaching of History at primary level, optional teaching of History at secondary level, and history as a choice discipline that is but quickly fading at tertiary level. Ultimately, the future preservation of our culture and heritage lies in the embracement of our heritage, culture and values through education, and that means teaching History as a compulsory subject at school level to provide a foundation of much needed celebration of our past.

Education is a feature that is commonly used by societies to transmit what society deems important. History is a valuable instrument through which such a goal could be achieved.

Failure to recognize this would be a colossal mistake that could be felt for decades to come. History is what makes people see in themselves, as different, as similar and yet as bound by more than their distinguished tribes or races.

This strikes at the core of and is related to issues of individual, personal and group identity.

History introduces the youth to traditions, practices, values and norms of the group. It initiates learners into these and helps them to recognize and accept them as part of who they truly are.

It would help young people to acquire new dispositions, which they do not have that are different from what they see, and the circumstances within which they are growing up. Dispositions that could help connect them with those who came before them and what they stood for as a society.

Furthermore, we think it is impossible to discuss the notion of social cohesion outside the country's socio-economic context. Various reports indicate that SA has not addressed the fundamental issue of racial socio-economic inequality. This is the main impediment to the attainment of national reconciliation and unity. Social cohesion is not solely based on the creation of values. It is inherently linked to the economic power configuration in society. In sum, we cannot create one nation in a society characterized by high levels of racial inequality.

*END*

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