

PUBLIC SECTOR INNOVATION CONFERENCE

11 OCTOBER 2016

Proposed Presentation: LINKING VOCATIONAL COLLEGES TO ECONOMIC GROWTH IN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITIES

**Title: Linking Vocational Colleges to Economic growth in District
Municipalities.**

Organisation: Access Trust

Presenter: Helga Jansen-Daugbjerg (Director)

‘The interest of all stakeholders need to be aligned to support the common goal of achieving good educational outcomes that are responsive to community needs and economic development’. *Chapter 9, National Development Plan*

Introduction

Thank you to Rhoda Kadalie, Chrishar Rock and the rest of the Impumelo team for giving Access Trust this opportunity. To the Konrad Adenaur Foundation and to SALGA for opening the space to engage the hard conversations of our time. Thank you also to Dr Mostert for convening this session, and good morning to my fellow panellists, and to you,

South Africa has under-gone dramatic transformation over the past 15 years. Strategic and formalised linkages have been designed between key role players in society: public vocational colleges, industry and national government. Policy plans such as the White Paper for Post-school Education and Training (2012), growth agendas such as National Development Plan 2030, the National Infrastructure Plan and related training plans for artisanal skills development are bold policy directives and hold the promise of social and economic transformation and development. As recently as last week, the Premier of this province launched the Game Changer Road Map which is a strategic and transversal response to the challenge of skills development, youth unemployment and overall economic and social growth.

However, national and provincial growth plans relegate skills training and work-placement to industry and SETAs. An example of this is the 2013/2014 launch of the Department of Higher Education's Decade of the Artisan Plan which entrusts artisan skills development to DHET and Industry SETA's. The Strategy Development and Stakeholder Management objective of the plan is to '*develop and coordinate and implement national artisan development strategies in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders*'. Again the National Development Plan, Chapter 13, is clear, 'that the public service and local government need to increase the pool of skilled people by ensuring that the public service and local government become careers of choice for graduates who wish to contribute to the development of the country...'

The policy positions and strategic plans offer exciting and a hope-filled vision of the South Africa we imagine, and indeed can be. However, the interconnectedness is often times silent of the role which local and district level government can play to join the skills revolution needed for the transformation of the rural and urban infrastructure landscape.

1. Challenge and Opportunity for Collaboration: LG and Public Colleges

I would offer that the opportunity for greater collaboration between local government and Technical Vocational Education and Training institutions, is implied, rather than clearly spelt out through the language of development catch-phrasing: stakeholders, partnerships, civil society, business and state actors. In my view the directives for greater collaboration should be clear, concise and instructive. It's a no-brainer. TVET Colleges can be conduit through which skilled artisan and management graduates pass through to the local government sector.

A cursory perusal of the Integrated Development Plans of local municipalities (e.g Oudshoorn, Draft Review Integrated IDP, 2013-2014), while identifying industries which are aligned to colleges offerings, offer no structured employment strategy to retain skills in district municipalities where they are needed. The flip-side is that colleges have not aligned their offerings to respond to the IDPs or local economic growth plans. So in districts in which, for example, agriculture has been identified

at provincial and local level as a growth industry, the vocational college cannot be relied on to provide the necessary locally trained skills to support this industry. In the Western Cape only one of the three rural colleges (Boland, West Coast and South Cape) offers a National Diploma in Agriculture. Yet, the agricultural sector and its related industries such as processing has been identified as a key driver of the provincial economy.

The West Coast District Municipality IDP 2012-2016 has identified the ocean economy (fishing) agriculture, tourism, mining and manufacturing as key economy drivers of its district economy. Yet West Coast College does not offer any direct programme to develop a local pool of skilled labour to develop and grow these industries, except for tourism.

The Cape Winelands District Municipality in its IDP has identified environmental sustainability and the rural economy as areas of development of its district. The Boland College does not however offer any study programme (except again for tourism) to develop district level skills capacity to take forward the IDP. Neither does it offer wine-making as a vocational education programme or sustainable farming methods.

Imagine if you will that the local College can offer to the District Municipality a cohort of skilled TVET graduates whose roots are in the area, whose lives are interconnected to the wellbeing of the district and who understand the nuanced needs of development unique to that area. In return the District Municipality is able to make real the national and provincial employment strategies by providing the work-place skills training, and eventual employment. It's a no-brainer.

The picture I am sketching in no way diminishes the existing partnerships and strategic relationships between the six public colleges in the province, and local government. The Student Support Services provides access to TVET graduates for internships at local municipal offices. Engineering graduates in electrical and construction are offered placements and indeed obtain much needed practical on the job training. However, I am of the view that these relationships should be

more formal, and have a stronger connection to the economic and social development goals of each municipality.

A stronger, strategic and formalised link between district municipalities, their IDPs and vocational college offerings can support local skills development, and its value-add to rural development.

2. Case Studies

What I am proposing; a formal strategic link between public TVET colleges and local government has strong case evidence. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, much like South Africa, has a strong policy orientation to technical vocational education. However, educationists and researchers such as Okeye and Arimonu (2016, *Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and a Way Forward*, Nnamdi Azikiwe University) illustrate much of the similar challenges we face such as a disconnect between the work-place requirements, and the curriculum. Ghana too has begun its process of identifying the challenges the TVET landscape in that country face (2012, Boateng). Much like South Africa it has overhauled its policy directives to develop greater links between industry and TVET institutions. But, in both these African examples, the policy discussions are vague are identifying state actors, except in broad brush strokes.

China, on the other hand provides an example of the provision of education for young people and adults alike, and aligning the economic need for innovation in technology with education outcomes (2015, Stuart. *Made in China: Challenge and Innovation in China's Vocational Education and Training System*). Through a complexed system of education policy development, implementation and administration over 3 decades China is preparing to move from large scale manufacturing, in a sense 'retailer to the world' to a leader in innovation and technology . Vocational education has a unique space in developing the skills to take China to the next level. An interconnected system of education from primary, to high school to the post-high school landscape offers each individual a path of learning which contributes to overall development. Most importantly, for our

discussion, the administrative and policy regimes are divided *between* two government departments and *across* inter-government departments. Each of these functions and administrative departments is replicated at the provincial and local level resulting in the largest Vocational Education landscape in the world.

German Model of Vocational Education Systems: There has been much national conversation of the German Dual System of education in which students time-share theoretical vocational studies with on-the-job training. The Berufsschule system (undated, Bernd Hainmüller) depends on the size of the population of the district, and the economic needs. In large areas these schools are arranged by trades. In this example I wish to make clear the role of state and local municipality in the administration, regulation of TVET to ensure that the economic sectors and its requirements are serviced as well as providing youth employment and on the job training.

3. Lessons learnt and possible areas of engagement

Access Trust is small independent bursary organisation. We have been in existence since 1998, and provide financial and student support to TVET students. In 2015 we realised that if we are to remain relevant and be aligned to the provincial and national growth imperatives, we needed to make a strategic shift which includes accompanying on-course and graduating students to the world of work. And these are the lessons we have learnt:

- 1) The school system does not prepare young people for the world of work adequately;
- 2) There is a urban bias for work-seeking activities among our rural students;
- 3) Employers and industry require soft skills in prospective employees, which graduating students don't have;
- 4) There is a disconnect between college offerings and local economic trajectories

What are the Access Trust strategic interventions?

- We have piloted the TVET Graduates Attributes Programme which seeks to develop work-seeking skills and increase overall employability in graduating students.
- We have prioritised the funding of study programmes which are aligned to provincial growth trajectories.
- We have incentivised the completion of our student support programmes by offering much needed work-place communication skills and a driving school programme of 10 lessons.
- We have prioritised supporting young women in traditional male dominated industries.
- We have, within our own capacities, endeavoured to place students in industry.

Our interventions do require broader partnerships and greater alignment. So how can municipalities get the very best from their local TVET College?

- 1) Lobby at inter-government level to fast-track the most visionary aspects of TVET Education such as working to a greater dual system of vocational education;
- 2) Create spaces at the local government level to build stronger partnerships for the dual system to develop;
- 3) While education provision is not a local government competency, and remains very much a central government function; the realities of provision of this public good calls on all levels of government to work together. ECD support is crucial and has achieved much successes these past years, but what happens to those children once high school is completed. If they don't complete high school what options are there for them in terms of education. And if a mainstream academic school system does not suite them, how do we as a society still skill them to participate as conscious, active, economically viable citizens?

- 4) Support public colleges in their efforts to modernise, update, align curriculum offerings to speak directly to the needs of district municipalities;

4. Conclusion

These questions and so many others, that I am sure you will interrogate in the remainder of the day requires what is in short supply in our landscape these days: innovative thinking of our path ahead as a society, greater imaginaries of how prepared our young people must be to inherit the future, and lastly fearless leadership to make the hard choices and decisions required.

Vocational education is the cornerstone of social, economic and spatial transformation and at the district municipal level. Municipalities are at the coal face of putting in action our vision of a South Africa inspired by our greatest dreams.

-end-