

Proposal from David Anthony Pittaway, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Proposal Background:

- I think it is relevant to briefly state where I am coming from – the relevance will soon become clear. I am nearing completion of a Philosophy PhD through the University of the Free State. For the past 4 years I have lectured first-year philosophy at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Prior to that, I lectured A Level students in the United Kingdom for four years. Prior to that, I lectured several BA subjects at Varsity College in Port Elizabeth. Prior to that, I was a 'prac' teacher at a high school, and prior to that, a university tutor.
- I mention this background because I come from a place of learning. A place where it is my duty to act responsibly and set a good example to people for whom I facilitate learning. I do not take this responsibility lightly. It is a great honour to be able to help people learn, especially in our beautiful country with all of her beautiful people and with her diverse cultural backgrounds. I support recent calls to make education more accessible and more heterogeneous, and I have involved myself in this transitional time for education in South Africa.
- I here offer brief support for an idea that, if implemented, will generate revenue primarily to be put towards education. However, if implemented, the idea will generate massive revenue to be channelled into various arenas of community upliftment and empowerment.

Proposal Details:

- This proposal has some precedent in parliament. IFP member Mario Ambrosini tabled the Medical Marijuana Bill in 2014, shortly before his death from lung cancer. This Bill proposed making Marijuana legal for medical reasons.
- The current proposal, however, aims higher, and has precedents in the United States of America.
- Oregon, Alaska, and Washington, D.C., ballot initiatives to completely legalize marijuana were passed in 2014. In the same year, New York became the 23rd state to approve medical marijuana. As of June 2016, 25 states and Washington D.C. have legalized cannabis for medical use.
- Added to the list on Tuesday 8 November 2016 is California: “Californians voted to approve marijuana for recreational use... [N]early 40 million more people will soon be living in a state that has decided to tax and regulate marijuana like alcohol rather than treat it like a criminal enterprise. California now joins Colorado and Washington state — which voted to legalize weed in 2012 — as well as later arrivals Alaska, Oregon and Washington, D.C.
- According to the Drug Policy Alliance, at “least 28 countries around the world have eliminated criminal penalties for marijuana possession, including Canada, Belgium, Spain, and Jamaica. In 2013, Uruguay became the first country in the world to approve the legal regulation of marijuana for adult use”.
- According to the Huffington Post: “Colorado produced a regulated, free market system with local control, so that localities could determine the extent to which adult-use marijuana facilities could operate in their jurisdictions. This system, including both medical and adult-use products, produced \$1 billion in sales in 2015 and will likely top \$1.2 billion in 2016. At the same time, teen use has remained flat in the state and overall problems associated with the legal market appear to be quite limited.”
- Of the \$1 billion (approximately R14 billion) in legalised Marijuana sales in Colorado in 2015, \$70

million was generated in tax revenue. That is equivalent to R980 million, almost a billion Rand in taxes.

- For the 2016 academic year, The Colorado Education Department received \$86.3 million from the tax revenue of legalised Marijuana sales. That is approximately R1 billion for education alone from the taxation of legalised Marijuana.
- According to the washingtonpost.com, “In 2015, the legal marijuana industry in Colorado created more than 18,000 new full-time jobs and generated \$2.4 billion in economic activity”.
- Various sources, such as the Drug Policy Alliance, report that none of the negative concerns that people had about legalised Marijuana has become a reality.
- The sales and tax numbers are truly staggering. Further research into these numbers surrounding the full legalisation and taxation of Marijuana shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is an amazing opportunity to generate huge revenue for all sorts of projects.
- This should be very exciting news considering the impasses of the recent #FeesMustFall phenomena. The protests signify a turning point in our country. Solutions have not been offered in any meaningful sense regarding a pro-active route forward for funding. Here we have an opportunity to create funding for education, and a plethora of other social projects.
- The economic impact of the legalisation of Marijuana is massive. According to businessinsider.com, “The US cannabis industry 'will pump up to \$44 billion (R616 billion) ANNUALLY into the country's economy by 2020, if current business and legalisation trends continue" the report [from Marijuana Business Daily] says. This is more than double the \$14-17 billion impact it currently has.”
- Marijuana, locally often called 'dagga', has been a part of African cultural practice for centuries. The move towards legalisation is therefore not only an economic no-brainer, especially considering the difficulties surrounding funding in education in South Africa at the moment, but it is also a move towards decolonisation where the inherent freedoms and rights of people are acknowledged and respected.
- The briefest research into this topic will show that Marijuana has hundreds of different uses and therefore its legislation will transform industry in this country, creating business, entrepreneurial, and employment opportunities across the board.
- A small amount of research will also dispel the myths surrounding Marijuana use. Alcohol and cigarettes directly cause millions of deaths worldwide every year, while Marijuana directly causes no deaths. It is for reasons such as these that the Vice Chancellor of NMMU, Derrick Swartz, replied to me in an email saying:
- “I have no moral or other qualms about its use for medicinal and cultural reasons, and have always been puzzled by the double standards in much of the western world if one looks at, inter alia, the odious cigarette empires on the basis of which most industrial economies were built. Indeed, I support the call for the South African parliament to review current prohibition laws, particularly with respect to medical and cultural practices”.
- Honourable members of parliament: If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door. I firmly believe, after over a decade of research and consideration, that the legalisation and taxation of Marijuana in South Africa will transform our beautiful country for the better, improving access to all social services, and providing empowerment and upliftment opportunities. Let us build this door.