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PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

RESEARCH UNIT

PO Box 15 Cape Town 8000 Republic of South Africa
Tel: 27 (21) 403 8273 Fax: 27 (21) 403 8118
www.parliament.gov.za

THE NEED FOR A YOUTH POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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1. Introduction

Annually, South Africa celebrates Youth Day, when it commemorates the vast contributions of young South Africans to the liberation struggle. Yet three decades on, South Africa has still not adopted a national youth policy and in so doing, has effectively not recognised the contributions of young South Africans to the development of an open and democratic society.

The youth represents an important sector of South African society as they form the bulk of the economically active working class, as well as the bulk of unemployed South Africans. Any macro-economic policies and developmental plans therefore need to focus specifically on the youth if it is to succeed. Moreover, it is important that a policy focussing specifically on the needs of young South Africans is developed, with inputs from various sectors within the country.

President Mbeki, noted in his presentation of the budget vote of the Presidency to National Parliament, that the consultative process of the National Youth Policy was completed and that the policy will be formally adopted for immediate implementation.¹ This represents an important milestone, but also represents an important role for Parliament in the exercise of this oversight function. It is paramount for Parliament to play an important role in the critical development of those policies, in order to ensure that the needs of the young people are effectively catered for.

In doing so, there are various factors that need to be looked at in order to ensure that the National Youth Policy effectively serves the needs of those for whom it has been developed, namely the Youth. This paper will attempt to highlight the need for a National Youth Policy, by providing a profile of South African youth, setting out the machineries of Government which attempt to address the needs of the youth, illustrating important provisions that need to be included in the policy and measures that need to be included in order to ensure that Government can effectively monitor the implementation of the policy.

2. Profiling South African Youth

To effectively understand the need for a youth policy, it is important to provide a demographic profile of youth in South Africa. This will serve as a means to understand the importance of the need for a youth policy, simply because of the sheer size of the demographic.

According to the National Youth Commission Act 633 of 1996, which aims to redress the imbalances of the past through creating a national youth policy aimed at empowering the youth and allowing them to realise their full potential through optimal access to opportunities², 'youth' is defined as persons

¹ T. Mbeki, 2008, Address of the President of the Republic of South on the occasion of the Presidency Budget Vote.

² The National Youth Commission Act, 633 of 1996.



between the ages of 14 and 35. The term youth therefore refers to the largest sector of the South African population, and it is therefore imperative to recognise the role that the youth have played, and continue to play in the South African society. Moreover, the rationale for the upper age limit of 35 is prefaced on the notion of correcting the imbalances of the past.³ This age limit is also consistent with that agreed to in the African Youth Charter, which South Africa yet has to ratify.⁴

In profiling South African youth, there are certain difficulties in indentifying the group in terms of the sheer size of the population grouping. Firstly, it is important to note that the grouping (14 – 35) is by no means a homogenous group and such the problems and hurdles experienced by youth are not common within the grouping. It is important that when dealing with issues relating to youth, these issues are disaggregated according to a variety of factors, including race, age, gender, social class and geographic location because it is to realise that the youth does represent a homogenous group.⁵

Secondly, it is important for any policy to take cognisance of these factors, as it would directly affect the implementation of the policy within each of the provinces. The role of the Provincial Youth Commissions in this regard is of particular importance. Moreover, the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Children, Youth and Disabled Person would have to play a key role in the development of the policy in this regard, as the policy would have to cater for the needs of youth throughout the country, with particular emphasis placed on youth in rural areas.

Thirdly, in profiling youth, various methodologies are used to determine the size of the youth segment of the South African population. This is particularly troublesome as one would then be unable to use reliable/credible statistics in determining certain policies that target youth. The most common figures used to describe certain aspects within the South African population, is the Labour Force Survey. The Labour Force Survey, is specifically designed to measure the labour market and provides insight into a variety of issues related to the labour market, including employment patters, as well as the structure of the economy.⁶ The survey is conducted by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA).

According to Stats SA, youth comprises 34 % of the South African population.⁷ In relative terms, it is projected that the youth portion of the South African population will account for 40% of the South African population by the end of 2008.⁸ The size of this population group is known as a youth bulge and denotes the relative youth of the South African population. It is therefore important, that for South Africa to reach its developmental goals, any policies and programmes that are implemented need to specifically target youth. Moreover, the size of the youth population will also highlight the importance of the need for a youth policy. This will be discussed below.

³ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 35.

⁴ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 35.

⁵ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 35.

⁶ The Labour Force Survey, September 2005, pg. 1.

⁷ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 35

⁸ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 35



2.1. Youth and Employment

When analysing the state of employment of youth within South Africa, it is important to take note of the definition of employment that is employed. For the purposes of this discussion, the definition employed by the Labour Force Survey will be used in order to assess the size of employed youth within South Africa. The definition for youth used by the Labour Force Survey is defined as:

"...those who performed work for pay, profit for family gain in the seven days prior to the survey interview for at least one hour, or who were absent from work during the seven days, but did have some form of work to which return to."

Moreover, according to the Labour Force Survey, the official working age group is between 15 and 65 years of age. If one is to use these definitions, there are 29 million employed South Africans. Following from that total, the total number of employed youth in South Africa accounts for 60 % of the working population. However, youth form 70% of the unemployed population within South Africa. This serves to highlight the gross over-representation of youth amongst the unemployed population within South Africa.

The importance of these totals in terms of a youth policy, is that they serve to reflect the importance of South Africa's developmental goals. South Africa will not be able to meet its developmental goals, such as Millennium Development Goal 1, eradication of poverty, if it does not develop and implement a youth policy to effectively target the vast numbers of unemployed youth within the country.

3. Legislative and Policy Framework for a Youth Policy

The development of a youth policy needs to happen within the existing framework that is key to the development of youth within South Africa. The National Youth Commission developed a National Youth Policy in 1997, however this policy was never adopted as the Government had decided to rather endorse the National Youth Development Policy Framework. It is therefore important that a youth policy be formulated in the ambit of Constitutional Supremacy and respect for human dignity.

3.1 The Constitution of South Africa

The preamble of the Constitution⁹ describes its aim as healing the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. This is particularly important for the purposes of a youth policy as it would guide the aims of that policy, particularly attempting to heal the divisions of the past and address past injustices that continue to marginalise certain groups within South Africa, particularly the youth.

⁹ The Constitution Act 108 of 1996.



Moreover, the Bill of Rights contains specific protections against discrimination based on, *inter alia*, age. A national youth policy would need to be uphold these protections and responsibilities that inevitably guide the inherent rights and responsibilities of all young South Africa.

3.2. The National Youth Commission Act

As will be discussed below, the National Youth Commission (NYC) was established in terms of the National Youth Commission Act 633 of 1996. The Act established the NYC and mandates the Commission to co-ordinate and develop an integrated national youth policy.¹⁰ The NYC therefore plays an integral role in the development and implementation of a national youth policy, as well as lobbying (including informing, educating, developing partnerships with) civil society and youth organisations to further drive youth development within South Africa. The NYC therefore serves as the pivotal driver of a youth policy in South Africa.

3.3. National Youth Development Policy Framework

The National Youth Development Policy Framework (NYDPF) represents the background for Government's policies and actions towards youth development, setting the backdrop of equity, diversity, redress, responsiveness to youth development as well as inclusivity, accessibility, gender sensitivity and transparency.

The NYDPF illustrated the integrated approach of Government to youth development and set the scene for the development of a youth policy. Moreover, the NYDPF recognises the importance of the private sector as well as civil society in the development and implementation of a youth policy. It is therefore important that a youth policy follow on from the principles contained in the NYDPF.

3.4. World Programme of Action On Youth (2000)

In 1995, the United Nations strengthened its commitment to the youth of the world by adopting the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY) to effectively address the problems of young people and to increase the opportunities for the participation of youth in society.¹¹

The WPAY provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national governments and regional organisations to improve the situation of youth within countries and regions.¹² The key thematic areas dealt with by the WPAY are¹³:

- Education;
- Employment;
- Hunger and Poverty;

¹⁰ Section 3 (a) of the National Youth Commission Act 633 of 1996.

¹¹ <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/ywpa2000.htm>

¹² <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/ywpa2000.htm>

¹³ <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/ywpa2000.htm>



- Health;
- Drug Abuse;
- Juvenile Delinquency;
- Leisure-time activities;
- Girls and Young Women; and
- The full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making.

The key responsibilities placed on governments relates specifically to actions to be taken, namely:¹⁴

- To formulate and adopt an integrated national youth policy as a means of addressing youth-related concerns;
- Undertake special efforts to develop and disseminate model frameworks for integrated policies and to identify and organise an appropriate division of responsibilities among governmental and non-governmental entities concerned with youth-related issues;
- Strengthen national capacities for data-collection and dissemination of information, research and policy studies, planning, implementation and coordination; and
- Establish or strengthen national coordinating mechanisms for integrated youth policies and programmes.

The WPAY is an important tool for the development of an integrated youth policy in South Africa. It sets the scene for co-operation between countries in the development of a youth policy, as well as outlining key areas of concern when developing a youth policy. Whilst the WPAY does not confer on signatories certain obligations, it does provide a pivotal benchmark in the implementation and evaluation of a youth policy, once implemented.

3.5. The African Youth Charter (2006)

One of the key provisions of the WPAY is the recognition of the role of regional organisations in the development of a youth policy. The African Youth Charter (AYC) represents such a measure. The AYC represents a strategic framework for the development of a youth policy at national and regional levels. Whilst South Africa has not officially ratified the Charter, the President has intimated in the presentation of the Budget Vote of the Presidency¹⁵ that the AYC will be presented to Parliament for ratification in July 2008. It is therefore important to highlight the importance of the AYC in the development of a youth policy within South Africa.

The AYC is important to the development of a youth policy as it provides that State Parties are obliged to develop a comprehensive and coherent national youth policy as well as certain obligations that signatory states need to abide by when developing and implementing their respective youth policies. These include¹⁶:

¹⁴ <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/ywpa2000.htm>

¹⁵ T. Mbeki, 2008, Address of the President of the Republic of South on the occasion of the Presidency Budget Vote.

¹⁶ The African Youth Charter, 2006.



- That the youth policy be cross-sectoral in nature considering the inter-relatedness of the challenges facing young people;
- That the development of a national youth policy shall be informed by extensive consultation with young people and cater for their active participation in decision-making at all levels of governance in issues concerning youth and society as a whole;
- That a youth perspective be integrated and mainstreamed into all planning and decision-making as well as programme development;
- That mechanisms to address youth challenges shall be framed within in the national development framework of the country;
- That the policy shall provide guidelines on the definition of youth adopted and specify subgroups that shall be targeted for development;
- That the policy shall advocate equal opportunities for young men and for young women;
- That a baseline evaluation or situation analysis shall inform the policy on the priority issues for youth development;
- That the policy shall be adopted by Parliament and enacted into law;
- That a national youth coordinating mechanism shall be set up and shall provide a platform as well as serve as a linking agent for youth organisation to participate in youth policy development as well the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of related programmes;
- That national programmes of action shall be developed that are time bound and that are connected to an implementation and evaluation strategy for which indicators shall be outlined; and
- That the programme of action shall be accompanied by adequate and sustained budgetary allocation.

As a future Signatory State, the South African Government will have to ensure that in terms of the development and implementation of a youth policy, attention is paid to the regional obligations that are enforceable under the AYC. These provisions will have a direct impact on the development of the youth policy.

4. Institutional Arrangements dealing with Youth

In order to investigate the need for an integrated Youth Policy, it is important that one assess the institutional arrangements that exist and which inevitably drive a national youth policy. Institutional arrangements refer to the programmes that have been initiated by government and other private agencies that aim to improve the status of youth within South Africa. It is important to mention that while there exists no specific youth machinery that addresses the needs of youth within South Africa, there are however certain programmes which aim to do so. Moreover, some of these programmes do not target only youth, but includes this category of persons within the ambit of their target group.

4.3. The National Youth Commission

As part of the machinery of government, the National Youth Commission (NYC) was set up in terms of the National Youth Commission Act, 633 of 1996 to redress the imbalances of the past and to create



a national youth policy aimed at empowering the youth and allowing them to realise their full potential through optimal access to opportunities.

Located in the office of the Presidency as the Youth Desk, the objects of the National Youth Commission shall be¹⁷:

- To co-ordinate and develop an integrated national youth policy;
- To develop an integrated national youth development plan that utilises available resources and expertise for the development of the youth and which shall be integrated with the Reconstruction and Development Programme;
- To develop principles and guidelines and make recommendations to the Government regarding such principles and guidelines, for the implementation of an integrated national youth policy;
- To co-ordinate, direct and monitor the implementation of such principles and guidelines as a matter of priority;
- To implement measures to redress the imbalances of the past relating to the various forms of disadvantage suffered by the youth generally or specific groups or categories of persons among the youth;
- To promote a uniformity of approach by all organs of state, including provincial governments, to matters relating to or involving youth;
- To maintain close liaison with institutions, bodies or authorities similar to the Commission in order to foster common policies and practices and to promote co-operation;
- To co-ordinate the activities of the various provincial government institutions involved in youth matters and to link those activities to the integrated national youth policy; and
- To develop recommendations relating to other matter which may affect youth.

In terms of Parliamentary oversight over the functions of the National Youth Commission, because the Commission is located in the Office of the Presidency, Parliament exercises oversight over the functions of the NYC. In terms of Parliamentary interaction, the NYC reports to Parliament mainly through the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Children, Youth and Disabled Persons. However, because of the broad scope of its activities, the NYC may report to a host different Parliamentary Committees. Moreover, in terms of section 7 of the National Youth Commission Act, the Commission may also approach Parliament with regard to any matters relating to the exercising of its powers or the performance of its duties or the carrying out of its functions. Essentially, this means that Parliament has a critical role to play in the development of a national youth policy through its oversight function and to ensure that such a policy, once implemented, is done in a manner that is consistent with the objects of the Constitution and the NYC objectives.

¹⁷ Section 3 (a) – (i) of the National Youth Commission Act 633 of 1996.



4.4. The Umsobomvu Youth Fund

The Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF) was created by Government in 2001 and is tasked with promoting entrepreneurship, job creation, skills development and skills transfer amongst South Africans between the ages of 18 and 35. The UYF is a government created finance agency for skills development and employment creation for young people.¹⁸

In terms of reporting lines, the UYF reports directly to the Minister of Labour. In terms of its mandate, UYF provides a broad spectrum of services, aimed empowering youth and facilitating the economic empowerment of youth. *Inter alia*, the UYF provides¹⁹:

- Information on such topics as employment, careers, education, training, community development and health issues.
- Information on how to start your own business and other self-employment initiatives.
- Information to prospective employees and employers via a specially designed portal where employee and employer can find suitable candidates on line.
- Information on learnerships, skills development programmes and education and training.

It is clear when viewing the services provided by the UYF, that they play an important role in the development of skills and the advancement of economic empowerment amongst the youth in South Africa. As a government institution, the UYF operates very closely with other youth structures, including the NYC. In so doing, the UYF provides important input into the development of a youth policy, specifically focussing on youth development and prosperity.

Moreover, Parliament, as part of its oversight functions, has an important role to play in the development, through its oversight and accountability function, of the UYF and its relations with the NYC, in the development of a national youth policy. In terms of Parliamentary interaction, the UYF may report directly to the Portfolio Committee on Labour as well as the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Children, Youth and Disabled Persons.

4.5. The South African Youth Council

The South African Youth Council is an umbrella body, representing more than 60 youth organisations within South Africa. Very little information is available regarding the mandate of the South African Youth Council and it is very important for Parliament to ascertain the exact functioning of the organisation, as to what extent it operates in the best interests of the youth of South Africa.

¹⁸ "South Africa Addressing Youth Development – the Most Pressing Post-Apartheid Development Challenge for Youth"

prepared by the Youth Development Network for Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 – 24 June 2004.

¹⁹ <http://www.youthportal.org.za>



4.6. The National Youth Service

The National Youth Service (NYS) is a programme that is administered by a team comprising of the NYC, the UYF, the South African Youth Council, the National Department of Labour and the National Department of Education. However, depending on the project which is being implemented, other government departments will also be concerned.

The key objectives of the National Youth Service are to:²⁰

- To inculcate a culture of service by supporting youth to participate constructively in nation-building;
- To inculcate in young people an understanding of their role in promotion of civic awareness and national reconstruction;
- To develop the skills, knowledge and abilities of young people to enable them to make the transition to adulthood;
- To improve youth employability through opportunities for work experience, skills development and support to gain access to economic and further learning opportunities; and
- To harness the nation's untapped human resource and provide a vehicle for enhancing the delivery of the country's development objectives especially to disadvantaged and underserved communities.

The aim of the NYS is to increase the quality and scope of government interventions that target youth as well as speeding up service delivery by harnessing the potential of South African youth. It is envisaged, that through this approach, the employability of youth will be enhanced. The main tenet of the NYS is an integrated approach that focuses on both public and private initiatives. Moreover, young people receive training and skills development that they then employ in their communities. It is believed that through these skills development initiatives, young people are able to utilise their skills in various sectors of the South African labour market.

Thus the NYS will focus on the development of effective partnerships, between government, civil society, communities and private sector and will support the design and implementation of the NYS programmes in a manner that supports government service priorities.²¹

It is important for Parliament, through its Committee system, to observe the operation of such public private partnerships and the level at which they are implemented. This is particularly important for the development and implementation of a national youth policy, in that the education and skills development of youth should form the cornerstone of any policy that focuses on the youth. Moreover, Parliament should assess the level of success of these programmes and ascertain whether these measures could be protected within the ambit of a national youth policy and be implemented at various levels within

²⁰ <http://www.nysu.org.za>

²¹ <http://www.nysu.org.za>



4.7. The Expanded Public Works Programme

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is a key programme of Government that aims to increase the employability of targeted groups, provide work experience and create value chains through entrepreneurship.²² It is important to note that while the EPWP is a government initiative, it does not however only target youth. The EPWP also targets women and disabled persons. Moreover, young people have been identified as beneficiaries in major public works programmes and these programmes have been designed to be labour intensive.²³

The EPWP is involved in creating temporary employment for target groups, using public expenditure. The emphasis of the EPWP is on unskilled labour opportunities, while skills development and training is provided by the SETA's and the Department of Labour.

As has already been stated, the EPWP is not a youth-specific programme, but rather includes youth as one of the beneficiaries.

It is important for Parliament to assess the levels at which youth are beneficiaries of these programmes and what the impact on youth are, that have completed programmes within the EPWP. Moreover, the EPWP is important tool for the development of youth within South Africa and therefore needs to be assessed in terms of the impacts on youth in light of a national youth policy.

4.8. The National Youth Development Agency

The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) is a governmental initiative aimed at creating a merger between the NYC and the UYF. To this aim, an inter-ministerial task team has been established comprising of representatives of the aforementioned agencies, the Department of Labour, the Department of Finance and the Presidency. The aim of the task team is to undertake a feasibility study into the possible merger and what the effects of the possible merger would be on the institutions involved.²⁴

Once the feasibility study is completed, recommendations will then be forwarded to relevant government departments, including the Department of Labour, the Department of Finance, the Presidency and the Department of Public Service and Administration. It is important for Parliament to assess the merger between the two organisations concerned, and to what extent the merger will have on the implementation of a national youth policy. Moreover, what roles the relevant government departments will have in the development and implementation of a national youth policy.

²² "South Africa Addressing Youth Development – the Most Pressing Post-Apartheid Development Challenge for Youth" prepared by the Youth Development Network for Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 – 24 June 2004.

²³ "South Africa Addressing Youth Development – the Most Pressing Post-Apartheid Development Challenge for Youth" prepared by the Youth Development Network for Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 – 24 June 2004.

²⁴ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 35.



5. The need for a Youth Policy

The role of youth in South African society is of pivotal importance as they represent the future of the country and shape the course of development of South Africa. Moreover, youth development is based on principles of social and economic justice, human rights, active citizenship and common values.²⁵

Youth make up a large portion of the South African population and bringing them into the fore of policy development and implementation breaks the cycle of inter generational wealth.²⁶ Neglecting the youth could lead to involvement in crime, violence and conflict, highlighted by the recent acts of xenophobia. Because of the sheer size of the demographic and their importance in reaching developmental goals, a governmental policy focussing specifically on youth is of utmost importance.

5.1. Economic Development, Poverty and Youth

One of the major problems facing South Africa is the high rate of unemployment. No where is this more prevalent, than in the youth population of South Africa, where the youth make up 70 % of the unemployed population.²⁷ The participation of youth in the open labour market is often compromised by lack of education and skills coupled with difficulties in accessing information about careers and available jobs.²⁸ Moreover, a large number of employed youth are employed in the service sector where the majority of employment opportunities are on a temporary basis and have no long term prospects.²⁹ The key economic challenge facing youth is therefore centred around finding and maintaining quality employment with a view to improve the individual socio-economic conditions.

However, the critical issues that hamper the economic development of youth are varied and complex. These problems cannot be tackled or addressed via a blanket rule. Instead it requires an integrated approach that focuses on youth in its entirety. It is important that any policy that attempts to address the vast unemployment of youth needs to focus on the various cohorts of the youth spectrum. These include women, people with disabilities and the rural youth.

The lack of economic development and high rate of poverty amongst youth can largely be attributed to the lack of career guidance in public schools because of the history of isolation and disadvantage.³⁰ Moreover, there exists a direct nexus between high levels of poverty and levels of education. It is therefore important for a youth policy to address and specifically target the education of youth, specifically rural youth, women and youth with disabilities.

²⁵ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 35.

²⁶ Youth Policy Initiative, Human Sciences Research Council, <http://www.hsrb.ac.za> accessed on the 11/06/2008

²⁷ "South Africa Addressing Youth Development – the Most Pressing Post-Apartheid Development Challenge for Youth" prepared by the Youth Development Network for Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 – 24 June 2004.

²⁸ Busani Ngcaweni, "Beyond the 30th Anniversary of June 16: Youth Development and the current Policy Trajectory." 2006; pg. 39.

²⁹ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 22.

³⁰ "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Umsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 9.



These social and economic realities continue to prevail despite the many initiatives (such as ASGISA, JIPSA) that have been initiated in order to improve the situation amongst young people. In order to increase the economic participation of youth, it is important for a youth policy to focus on improving micro-financing services so as to increase the participation of youth in the local economic development in their areas (Leap between First and Second Economy).³¹ These initiatives need to be enhanced and coupled with the introduction of new and dynamic initiatives, if it is to have any concrete effect on the economic development of youth and enable South Africa to meet its developmental goals. It is also imperative that barriers like lack of appropriate education and social networks be removed.³² This will be discussed below.

5.2 Education and Skills Development

Given the history of gross inequality in South Africa, the education system is skewed along racial lines and between urban and rural area. Education and skills development are very important drivers for economic development and as such require special interventions from both Government and civil society in order to unlock the potential of South African youth. Education and skills development not only increases chances for employment, but increases the opportunity for work sooner.

Many problematic areas exist with the current education system, including the quality of the tuition at schools, the current drop out levels at schools and lack of appropriate academic resources. These negatively affect the ability of young people to secure quality employment and participate in the economic development of the country. Moreover, whilst education has been made available to the vast majority of South African youth, it is often race and gender that determine the ability of young people to continue to the higher education levels.³³ The ability of the aforementioned groups to access appropriate funding also remains a problem in the South African education system. Government needs to unlock resources that enable the full spectrum of the youth cohorts to advance their levels of education, particularly in areas of core and scarce skills.

Whilst the majority of the problems facing youth and education are systemic, it seems that the youth are also not taking advantage of the opportunities that are available to them. Participation rates in Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges are relatively low, whilst only half of the participants in FET Colleges actually complete their studies.³⁴

Nine factors were highlighted by the South African Human Rights Commission Public Hearings into the Right to Education in 2006. These included³⁵:

- The impact of poverty on accessibility to quality education, inability to pay fees and other hidden costs related to education;

³¹ "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Umsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 11.

³² "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 22.

³³ "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Umsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 15.

³⁴ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 20.

³⁵ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 20



- HIV and AIDS and the need to make the education system and teachers in particularly aware of the special needs of young people;
- The prevalence of violence and abuse in society spilling over into classrooms;
- To ensure that the needs of youth with disabilities are sufficiently addressed focussing particularly on the access to the education system.
- The way in the lack of infrastructure impacts on addressing the inequalities of the past;
- The lack of quality teachers due to the levels of qualifications, punctuality and attendance, insufficient training, the use of old teaching methods and the disconnection from the communities in which they teach; and
- Governance and community participation where many school governing bodies were ineffective and inoperative.

These factors highlight the importance of a need for youth policy that focuses particularly on the increase on education and skills development levels of South African youth. Moreover, they represent particular areas of concern in that they curtail the ability of young people attaining employment and contributing productively to the economic development of South Africa.

5.3 Health and Well-being

Whilst the South African youth represents the healthiest population within the country³⁶ the nature of health problems have taken a different character.³⁷ Instead, issues of substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour have become prevalent amongst South African youth.³⁸ This serves to denote the failure of governmental campaigns aimed increasing the awareness of the risks of unsafe sex and drug abuse.

In terms of unsafe sex and risky sexual behaviour, it has been revealed that young people are entering into sexual relationships at a younger age and this has resulted in many young people having to leave school because of unwanted pregnancies.³⁹ This is of particular importance in terms of HIV and AIDS infections in the country as it is projected that in terms of the current rate of HIV and AIDS infections, there will twice as many HIV and AIDS positive people in 2008 as there was in 1994. This is particularly problematic and represents a particular area of focus for a national youth policy.

Moreover, suicide and mental health problems amongst youth also appear to be prevalent amongst the youth.⁴⁰ This can be attributed to the increase use of recreational drugs and alcohol amongst young people.⁴¹ More than half of the youth population admit to using alcohol whilst more than 10 % of the same population admit to using recreational drugs.⁴²

³⁶ "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Unsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 23.

³⁷ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 25.

³⁸ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 25.

³⁹ "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Unsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 23.

⁴⁰ "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Unsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 23.

⁴¹ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 26.

⁴² "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Unsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 24.



If one is to take into account these factors, it is clear that if one is to address the health and well-being of young people that a youth policy would have to attempt to address behavioural patterns of the youth.

5.4. Social Integration, Social Cohesion and Civic Engagement

South African youth have a long history of engagement in the liberation struggle and overthrowing Apartheid. Moreover, the youth played an active part in the negotiation of democracy in the early nineties.⁴³ This was evident with the overwhelming participation of youth in the first democratic elections in 1994. This is in direct reference to the notion of civic participation that was felt characteristic of the youth during that time.

However, since the initial elections, voter levels amongst the youth have since declined. This is not a trend that is unique to South Africa, but is rather represents part of a global phenomenon. Moreover, writers agree that this should not be viewed as social withdrawal.⁴⁴ However, the role of social networks are integral to the realisation to the exercising of the constitutional right to vote.

Involvement and participation in community activities also play an important part in the social integration of youth as young people who participate in these activities (whether it be church clubs, sports organisations, and the like) are more likely to not engage in risky and destructive behaviour.⁴⁵ Moreover, the participation of young people in these activities nurtures networking, communication and information skills. It is therefore critical that a youth policy fosters notions of participation and social integration by encouraging the participation of youth in constructive and community building activities.

It is also necessary for a youth policy to focus on the social cohesion of youth within the broader social context. Social cohesion refers to the process through which individuals or groups are encouraged to participate in the society in which they live.⁴⁶ Moreover, it nurtures and fosters notions of a society based on the values and the norms entrenched in the Constitution. However, social cohesion can only flourish if young people have access to adequate facilities, infrastructure and opportunities. This has been severely hampered given the legacy of Apartheid. It is necessary to engage the youth in the full spectrum of social cohesive activities such as community participation, volunteering and civic service.

⁴³ "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Umsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 24.

⁴⁴ "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Umsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 29.

⁴⁵ "Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where we're at and where we're going" Umsobomvu Youth Fund 2005; pg. 24.

⁴⁶ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 27.



6. What should a Youth Policy Contain

A youth policy needs to be as integrated as possible in order to address the wide spectrum of problems and factors that continue to hamper the inclusion and participation of youth within South African society. Furthermore, it is necessary for a youth policy to recognise young people as an asset rather than a problem that needs fixing. This will assist in the facilitation of sustainable youth development and participation in the economic development of South Africa.

6.1. Education

Whilst it is important to encourage education within formal education system like schools and universities, a youth policy also needs to lay emphasis on informal education. Education through youth initiatives, youth clubs and non-governmental organisations are key in the development of youth into positive contributors in society. A youth policy should encourage the development of a strong non-governmental youth sector that recognises democratic, open and inclusive youth associations that involve young people.⁴⁷

6.2. Youth Training Policy

It is important for a youth policy to include the development of good trainers in the youth sector who act as stimulators of youth issues within communities.⁴⁸ These trainers will act as a means to create and develop non-governmental youth organisations within communities to facilitate and agitate the discussion of issues that are important to youth, like AIDS and HIV, education and drug and alcohol abuse.

Moreover, it will assist the growth of the non-governmental sector which is important for the development of policy and holding Government accountable to promises and obligations to the youth of South Africa.

6.3. Youth Legislation

A youth policy needs to be supported through an integrated youth machinery located within government. These machineries are important for the development, implementation and evaluation of a youth policy and to maintain the constant development of youth within the broader economic development of South Africa.

Not only should a youth policy stimulate the creation of a youth machinery within Government, it is also necessary for the development of a budget allocation necessary to promote the development of

⁴⁷ Lauritzen, P. "11 Indicators of a National Youth Policy" presented at the launch of the national action plan for a youth policy in Romania, 2001.

⁴⁸ Lauritzen, P. "11 Indicators of a National Youth Policy" presented at the launch of the national action plan for a youth policy in Romania, 2001.



youth at all levels. Aggregated budgets are necessary for the evaluation of Government's commitments to youth.

6.4. The Right to Information

The importance of the right to information should not be underestimated. The process of a development of a youth policy needs to inform the youth of the measures and initiatives that have been implemented to assist their development as productive citizens in South Africa. The importance of such a youth information policy would facilitate the ability of youth to keep Government accountable to the promises that they have made in terms of the youth policy.

6.5. Broader Youth Participation

It is important that the development of a youth policy should include the active engagement of youth in that process. It is important to include youth in the decision making processes of the development, monitoring and evaluation of the youth policy. Moreover, processes should also be developed to better facilitate the inclusion of youth in the development of their communities and provide access to facilities that are available to them.

Central to this is the inclusion of youth organisations and societies in the process of the development of a youth policy. Problems around youth accessing or providing constructive inputs into the development of a youth policy can better be facilitated with the inclusion of youth civic organisations that could better make submissions and inputs into the development of a youth policy.

6.6. Integrated Ministerial Participation

In order to address the vast range of challenges that face the youth of South Africa, it is key that an integrated approach to development insofar as government departments are concerned is needed. It is necessary that all government departments be involved in the development of a youth policy so as best to address the needs of the youth in South Africa. This would foster the notion that government departments have accepted their responsibility to the youth.

7. Implementation and Evaluation

Central to the development of a youth policy is the need for the implementation and evaluation of the policy. In terms of the implementation of the youth policy, an integrated approach by government is needed with optimized intergovernmental relations within departments as well as the three spheres of government. The key role players involved in the development of a youth policy also need to play a central role in the implementation of that policy. The roles of these role players need to be clarified so that each role can complement that of the other so as to ensure the seamless implementation of the youth policy as well as enhance service integration and coordination.⁴⁹ It is also important that a National Youth Policy Implementation Plan be devised to ensure that a national youth policy is

⁴⁹ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 35.



effortlessly implemented.⁵⁰ It is important that this implementation plan be developed in correspondence with the Medium Term Expenditure Framework cycle so as to best facilitate the implementation of the youth policy.⁵¹ It is important that all the spheres of Government be involved in the implementation of a youth policy. At a municipal level, this is particularly problematic because of the level of development of the local government level. Moreover, a youth policy framework does not exist at a local government level.⁵² This particularly hampers the implementation of a youth policy at all levels of government and the work of the strategic role players.

In terms of the monitoring and evaluation of a youth policy, it is necessary to develop certain indicators to monitor the level of implementation of the youth policy and what successes, if any, have been achieved. These indicators need to be clearly articulated in the youth policy to ensure that stakeholders are held accountable to the youth policy. Moreover, to further facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of a youth policy, it may be necessary to tap into governments monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that monitoring and subsequent reporting happens more frequently. The reporting on the implementation of a youth policy needs to make specific reference to issues of relevance, challenges and successes as well as spell out certain policy interventions in the development of young people.⁵³ There are however certain challenges in the implementation of a youth policy. Many of these initiatives require a significant level of cooperation and collaboration between government departments. Attempts should be made to include youth issues in the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) of local government authorities to specific impact on the service delivery of youth or at least that the IDP's and youth policy are aligned.

It is important that the private sector needs to play an active role in the implementation of a youth policy. However, public private partnerships have not been very successful.⁵⁴ Private companies have not tapped into the Government incentives because of the bureaucratic nature of these incentives as well as the fact that these incentives are more attractive to larger private companies as opposed to smaller companies.⁵⁵

8. Recommendations

As it has already been mentioned, in terms of Parliamentary oversight, the development of a youth policy would fall under the mandate of the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of the Child, Youth and Disabled Persons, and as such, these recommendations relate specifically to the oversight functions of that Committee.

⁵⁰ Nkondlo, N. "Who makes Policy decisions in the Youth Sector"; 23 May 2007, pg. 7.

⁵¹ Nkondlo, N. "Who makes Policy decisions in the Youth Sector"; 23 May 2007, pg. 7.

⁵² "South Africa Addressing Youth Development – the Most Pressing Post-Apartheid Development Challenge for Youth" prepared by the Youth Development Network for Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 – 24 June 2004.

⁵³ "National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013", National Youth Commission, June 2008, pg. 36.

⁵⁴ "South Africa Addressing Youth Development – the Most Pressing Post-Apartheid Development Challenge for Youth" prepared by the Youth Development Network for Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 – 24 June 2004.

⁵⁵ "South Africa Addressing Youth Development – the Most Pressing Post-Apartheid Development Challenge for Youth" prepared by the Youth Development Network for Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 – 24 June 2004.



It is recommended that:

- The JMC is briefed on the contents of the policy, the implementation plan and an accompanying budget.
- In terms of the development of a youth policy, that the JMC ascertains to what extent the relevant youth bodies (what do you mean?) have been involved in the process.
- In terms of the development of a youth policy, that the JMC ascertains to what extent youth and youth organisations have been involved in the process.
- The JMC ascertain what attempts have been made to erect youth machineries that align itself with the development of a youth policy.
- The JMC determine what initiatives would be planned too raise awareness about youth policy within civil society.