Interrogating Youth Leadership Development in South Africa

Overview and Leadership for a Winning Nation Strategy
Table of Contents

Table of Figures ............................................................................................................................................. 3
Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 4
1 The Situation of Young South Africans Today .......................................................................................... 6
2 Interrogating Youth Leadership ............................................................................................................. 13
3 Leadership for a Winning Nation Portfolio Strategy ........................................................................... 18
   3.1 Flagship Programme: The Leadership Incubator ........................................................................... 18
   3.2 Securing the Environment for Young People to Lead ................................................................... 20
   3.3 Youth Leadership Pipelines ........................................................................................................... 21
   3.4 Programmes that connect young people to opportunity and influence ....................................... 22
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................... 23
References .................................................................................................................................................... 24
Appendix A: Leadership for a Winning Nation Schematic ...................................................................... 27
## Table of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Young People (15-24) not in educational institutions and not employed</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Civic Participation of Young South Africans</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NYS Integrated Model</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>South Africa’s Youth Development Machinery (based on Potgieter 2004)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Responsibilities of the NYDA</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Otto Scharmer’s Matrix of Leadership Interventions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Young people in South Africa today are negotiating a complex reality wedged between a brutal apartheid history which they did not personally experience, a post-apartheid era where poverty and violence are the norm, and the knowledge that they will inherit an uncertain future. For the most-part as young people engage with South Africa, the country perceives them through the lens of being ‘problems’ to be solved. They are violent or apathetic, uneducated, diseased and unemployed. Those that deem to speak on their behalf are prone to irresponsible and many times nonsensical outbursts; and the nation struggles to divorce the individual political leaders from the broader young population. For the most part, they are a generation that South Africa believes it must control and mitigate against in case they bring the country to ruin. Scarcely do we engage with young people as agents of their own, and the country’s broader successes; as innovative, capable and with the potential to input wisely, inventively, and responsibly into the public realm. A scan of recent newspaper articles related to young South Africans reveals an overwhelming interest in the narrow political realm, the despair of unemployment, voter apathy, HIV infection, service delivery riots, and young people as beneficiaries of programmes. There is no mention of young people as active and engaged citizens tackling key social issues through their own initiative. It is crucial, though, to acknowledge that the way we talk and think about young people has more to do, as Durham argues, with the “social landscape” of South Africa than about young people themselves. Youth is a “social shifter” that indexes the society in which it is mobilised according to the conceptions identified with it:

As people bring the concept of youth to bear on situations, they situate themselves in a social landscape of power, rights, expectations and relationships – indexing both themselves and the topology of that social landscape. They do so not necessarily... in a static manner, but in a dynamic, contestive, and imaginative way. Shifters work metalinguistically, drawing attention to specific relations within a structure of relations, to the structure itself. This seems to be particularly the case with the mobilisation of the idea of

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'youth' in social life... To imagine youth, and to imagine the concept relationally, is to imagine the grounds and forces of sociality.\(^3\)

This concept paper will attempt to highlight one of the critical aspects involved in trying to shift our perceptions of young South Africans – their potential to lead through public innovation. It is crucial to develop an alternative narrative of young people in South Africa – one where despite the very real challenges they face, and social dangers they pose, they flourish as active, innovative and catalytic agents to shape our shared future. The paper begins with an outline of the current state of youth in South Africa, focussing primarily on their civic engagement; then to the field of leadership development and some key insights to shape interventions that engage young people as active citizens; and finally the paper will describe the strategic plan for the Leadership for a Winning Nation portfolio and its flagship Leadership Incubator as responses to the state of youth civic engagement and leadership in South Africa.

\(^3\) Ibid.
1 The Situation of Young South Africans Today

For the most part statistics related to young people are a depressing read. For example, almost 42% of South Africans between 18 and 24 years of age are not in educational institutions or employed; 49% of 15-34 year olds live in households with a per capita income below R555/month; and almost 20% of young people in the Youth 2000 survey indicated they believe they will never be employed.

![Figure 1 Young People (15-24) not in educational institutions and not employed](image)

Examining educational trends paints an equally difficult situation. Nico Cloete notes, in his report for the Centre for Higher Education and Training (CHET), that almost 1 million pupils require multiple second chances to achieve a matric qualification, 700 000 pupils that have matriculated require further education and training, and almost a million more need a variety of employment, training and youth service opportunities. It is clear that our educational institutions are failing young people, and furthermore that the job market simply does not have the capacity to absorb the numbers of young people exiting educational institutions either through graduating with qualifications or through drop-outs. Finding creative strategies to

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7 Cloete, N. *Educational Needs*, p.11.
address the needs of these young people is an urgent need. Young people in South Africa face a number of worries about their futures, yet despite this, surveys also note that young people tend to be hopeful about their life chances. In a Kaiser Family Foundation/SABC survey on HIV/AIDS and the media, 87% of young respondents reported that they were mostly hopeful about the future.

Of critical interest to this paper are the roles that young people are playing in society, and the ways in which they actively participate in their communities. Civic engagement and social participation are often cited as key aspects to young people’s development in society, yet are rarely comprehensively measured. The HSRC’s 2005 report – Young People in South Africa in 2005: Where We’re at and Where We’re Going – reflects that a small minority of young people engage regularly in civic activities. The report notes that the importance of engaging in community activities is the development of skills and competencies alongside an increased social capital making it less likely that they will fall through the cracks or engage in risky and self-destructive behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Few times a year</th>
<th>Once or twice a month</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>A few times a week</th>
<th>Every day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participates in a community society or club</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in a civic organisation or other community structure</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collects goods or money for church, charity or community organisation</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in community sports</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 Civic Participation of Young South Africans

While measuring the civic engagement of young people is important, the way in which this engagement is framed, only as a mitigator against self-destructive behaviour and not as a

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8 For a comprehensive analysis of the educational and employment opportunities available to young South Africans see the portfolio strategy and concept paper by Judy-Marie Smith “Connecting Young South Africans to Opportunity”.


positive contribution to broader society, places young people as beneficiaries of civic engagement rather than agents in processes of community transformation. Thus, while the report commendably argues that young people should be given more access to decision-making forums, and particularly to local government, it does little to illuminate the substantial contribution young people can and do make to their communities. From the 1970s onward, young people were acknowledged as critical players in bringing about social transformation and the end of apartheid in South Africa, yet in the post-apartheid era the notion of young-people’s agency to contribute meaningfully to building the nation is almost non-existent in our dealings with them.

One way in which government has attempted to deal with the 40% of young people neither in educational institutions or employment, and to explicitly develop young people’s civic engagement, is through the National Youth Service scheme (NYS).11 The NYS partners with key government projects (such as Extended Public Works Programme) or NGOs (such as City Year SA12) to provide structured work opportunities for young unemployed people to increase their skills and employability. Over 13,000 young people were being reached through the NYS each year by 2007.13 The NYS uses what it describes as an “integrated” model – combining community service with structured learning and ‘exit opportunities’ as depicted below.14

![Figure 3 NYS Integrated Model](image-url)

While the NYS reports to parliament each year, there have been no impact assessments of the programme on the life outcomes for NYS alumni. International reports do suggest that young people who engage in Youth Service projects tend to have increased life skills, self-confidence, social capital and employability;15 however investigation into their impact –

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14 Ibid.
especially on post-service employment levels – is critically needed in South Africa. In May 2010, Defence Minister Lindiwe Sisulu announced that she would be seeking to introduce national military service in order to instil discipline, commitment and patriotism in South Africa’s youth, while providing a post-school employment opportunity.\(^\text{16}\) Although widely condemned by civil society groups, particularly because of the similarity to apartheid-era conscription, the move was supported by the NYDA. No further moves were made by government on this front.

The most significant South African survey of the impact of civic engagement on young people’s life circumstances was the 2008 impact assessment of the loveLife\(^\text{17}\) groundBreakers programme, which has reached over 10,000 young people across the country.\(^\text{18}\) The groundBreakers programme is a year-long intervention which requires its participants to actively engage in and lead HIV-awareness orientated peer education and activities in their communities. Key findings from the assessment reveal that nearly 50% of groundBreaker graduates have achieved some level of post-matric qualification (against only 6% of their same-age counterparts); 60% of groundBreakers are employed (compared to only 36% of their counterparts) and two-thirds of groundBreaker alumni involved in community organisations hold leadership positions.\(^\text{19}\) That such overwhelmingly positive results have been shown by the groundBreakers programme points to the potential of well-run youth service programmes to aid in the educational attainment, self-esteem, and employability of young people and as such programmes that engage young people in civic service should be encouraged and supported.

Although youth development NGOs (such as loveLife and City Year SA) have shown a positive impact on their participants, there has been limited tracking of the broad impact of the youth development sector, or examination of the extent to which young South Africans are engaging in civic activities. Indeed, the seminal Youth 2000\(^\text{20}\) report has only one paragraph that interrogates the social engagement of young people, revealing that churches and sports were the two most significant spaces in which young people engaged with their communities. The fact that young people’s participation in their communities is not generally considered a factor to be measured reveals a lot about the way in which South Africans conceptualise the place of young people in our society. Much of the lack of publically visible participation of young people can perhaps be attributed to the dominance of party-political youth wings – and the ANC Youth League in particular – in the narrative of young South Africans. That the participation of young


\(^\text{19}\) Ibid.

people is largely framed in party-political terms may have stifled our ability to investigate, promote and encourage young people’s participation in society beyond the political – a lost opportunity for broad-based community and youth development.

Perhaps the most tragic factor of the social landscape of young South Africans has been the continued failure of the government agencies established to deliver and support young people’s development. Since 1996 South Africa has had a series of legislative frameworks that culminated in the 2009-2014 National Youth Policy which have broadly and largely correctly identified key areas for interventions and support. Unfortunately, the attendant delivery of services and opportunities has been incredibly problematic. The Umsobomvu Youth Fund and National Youth Commission which were initially established to represent and support youth development were amalgamated and collapsed in 2009 to form the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) largely due to claims of mismanagement and poor performance. The mandate of the NYDA is vast\(^{21}\), and yet surprisingly there is no mention of promoting or championing young people as valuable contributors to society, potential drivers of public innovation, and leaders at community and national level.

The performance of the NYDA has been marred by controversy, most prolifically through the R100-million spent on the World Youth Festival at the end of 2010, in what has been lambasted as a poorly organised event with massive resource wastages.\(^{22}\) The UYF and NYDA do have a strong track record of supporting youth-initiated entrepreneurship projects through seed funding, which is at least one aspect of their work that is to be commended. For example, between 2009 and 2010 the NYDA disbursed 7,500 microloans (valued at R23-million), R3-million in loans for small to medium enterprises, and R33-million in business consultancy vouchers to 4,244 young people.\(^{23}\) There has been little reporting on the successfulness of these ventures beyond their start-up phase.


The National Youth Policy 2009-2014 outlines critical factors for the development of young people, however when it comes to its implementation, there are few tangible mechanisms to ensure the proper implementation of policy recommendations. On point 14.4.6 of the NYP which calls for “Strengthen[ing] social cohesion through developing the youth sector’s capacity to design and implement effectively integrated youth development programmes, which foster social cohesion” the keys bodies recommended for implementation are the defunct Youth Development Forum (YDF) and the practically non-existent South African Youth Council. In Budlender et al’s critique of the budget associated with youth development they note that there are few budgets exclusively or primarily targeting the youth. They note that while budgets which probably have major relevance to young people (such education) amount to 25% of the national budget, the actual amount allocated to youth development directly is hard to track, and therefore the efficacy of interventions difficult to measure.

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Investigating how young South Africans contribute to society, rather than only how they are ‘problems to be solved’ can create space and allow for the establishment of mechanisms to embrace the potential and value that young people bring to the table. Through examining the ways in which young people engage in their communities, their desires and hopes, and the ways in which they feel they can and/or cannot contribute, we can begin to unlock mechanisms that could be used effectively to develop young people and connect them to opportunity. While individual NGOs often measure their impact on the life-chances of young people that come through their programmes it would be useful to start measuring the impact of young people’s actions beyond themselves and into the broader community.
2 Interrogating Youth Leadership

Perhaps the greatest example of the transformative power of youth leadership in the 21st century has been the protest action over the last two months that have radically reshaped the politics of the entire Middle East. Through highly connected networks across Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and Libya, young people have shared knowledge, tactics and information about how best to stand up to the regimes that have had a stranglehold on the region for decades. Although social media has been hailed as a key mechanism through which these communities of young people connected, it was the content of the knowledge they shared and the example they set which fundamentally shifted the region. It has almost become a truism that there is a leadership crisis in Africa, and that it is one of the critical factors underlying the continued under-development of the continent as a whole. The less rhetorical Von Doepp notes, “Academics, policy makers and opinion leaders have increasingly singled out the importance of leadership as a variable in shaping the various development and governance outcomes witnessed on the African continent.” One of the critical perspectives on why leadership plays such a critical role in the fortunes of African countries is that in new democracies, institutions, governing structures and newly imagined social relations are as yet unconsolidated and thus the scope for personal influence is far greater than in more established systems.

For the most-part youth leadership programmes are approached under two guises: the first as youth development programmes equipping young people with life-skills and self-confidence to take up leadership positions; the second as mechanisms of participation and representation, in which young people are selected to input into processes and/or represent their peers on decision-making bodies. Perhaps most symbolically in the move towards youth involvement in decision-making has been the declaration of 2010/11 as the UN Year of Youth with an emphasis on participation. Globally the last decade has seen an increase in initiatives aimed at youth participation, but critics have been wary of the potential hollow-ness of these interventions. As Sherry Arnstein, the developer of the ‘Ladder of Participation’ argues:

There is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process...the fundamental point is that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the

powerholders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo.29

Arnstein’s critique was more thoroughly extrapolated by Cooke and Kothari in their scathing analysis of the application of principles of participation in the context of internal development, *Participation: The New Tyranny*30 Youth parliaments, youth forums, youth consultations, youth representatives, youth conferences and any number more processes, events and positions that have been created to answer the question of participation have proved on the whole toothless and tokenistic. There are a few cases where real power has been given to young people: the Quebec Regional Youth Investment Funds, for example, each control a significant budget which the members of the Fund (all young people) choose to invest in youth development projects across the province.31 More often than not, however, youth participation programmes are seen as avenues to develop young people’s capacity rather than for them to have real power.

The latest trend in the field of youth civic engagement, and youth development, has been the emphasis on youth leadership development. Leadership development is a tricky field to define and often even programmes that describe themselves as promoting leadership development do little to distinguish between life-skills and leadership training. In fairness there is a large overlap between the components of the two fields. For example, the internal factors that Theron and Theron identify in their meta-review of young South Africans resilience reflect traits such as goal orientation, empathy, autonomy, conscientiousness, the ability to self-regulate, problem-solving, an internal locus of control and assertiveness.32 Arguably these forms of self-development are all crucial in leadership development. Perhaps the most insightful thinker on questions of leadership development in the 21st century is Otto Scharmer. In his view, traditional leadership development programmes – whether they are aimed at the business elite or young people – have focussed solely on the development of technical or life-skills, and internal self-development, rather than truly on the process-nature of what it takes to lead in a transformative way. As he describes it, we need to move away from an individualised notion of leadership development towards systems-thinking. He notes, “Leadership development is not

“Leadership development is not about filling a gap but about igniting a field of inspired connection and action”
- Otto Scharmer

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about filling a gap but about igniting a field of inspired connection and action.”\(^{33}\) In the model below he describes what the current leadership development paradigms are, and how they need to develop to accommodate the complexities of the 21st century.

![Figure 6 Otto Scharmer’s Matrix of Leadership Interventions](image)

According to Scharmer, current leadership development models tend to dwell in the bottom left-hand corner of the matrix, focussing primarily on building an individual’s technical ‘leadership skills’. Real leadership development, he argues, needs to move through the various aspects of the matrix to ultimately reach the top right-hand block of the matrix: focussing on developing whole systems interventions that build system-wide transformational capacity. Thus, for Scharmer, the definition of leadership becomes the “capacity of a community to co-sense and co-create its emerging future”\(^{34}\) with the individual no longer working for their organisation, community or company but working from it towards system-wide transformation. This version of leadership calls for individuals to be situated locally but connected and acting at a deeper systems-transforming level – something which is at the core of the Leadership Incubator programme being developed for the Leadership for a Winning Nation Portfolio.

Key to the development of leaders that are part of a field of inspired connection and action is the explicit development of individuals’ and communities’ social capital. Social capital

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\(^{34}\) Ibid.
can be defined in many ways, but a key contemporary scholar Robert Putnam, argues that social capital is “[the] feature of social organizations, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate[s] action and cooperation for mutual benefit.” For Putnam, social capital can be built through different processes such as volunteerism and civic engagement, and individuals with high social capital are those who have developed trusting and active connections throughout their communities. Where communities have high overall social capital, individuals can often benefit as it is easier to achieve tasks and to gain buy-in to transformative processes. The sociologist Edward Grebe for example notes in his analysis of the success of the Treatment Action Committee that, “[the] TAC drew heavily on pre-existing networks of friends, colleagues and acquaintances to launch movements, but quickly pulled in like-minded individuals and created links with significant outside actors.”

Building young people’s social capital is an intricate and complex process, one that is often excluded from leadership development interventions which focus solely on individual self-development skills. In South Africa the vast majority of explicit leadership development programmes are either aimed at high-achieving individuals but based within the academic context (e.g. the African Leadership Academy, the Mandela Rhodes Scholarships), short one-off residential retreats (e.g. Wilderness Programmes) or targeting ‘high-performers’ who have already succeeded in attaining positions of authority (e.g. Common Purpose). Broader youth development programmes often have a more sustained relationship with their participants, and a broader reach, but often conflate life-skills and leadership development presuming that reaching a level of sufficient self-development automatically translates into an ability to lead effectively. Furthermore, few leadership development programmes focus specifically on the potential of young people to drive public innovation and to actively contribute to the development of South Africa beyond just their immediate peer-group. The young leaders that are being developed in most programmes are certainly worthy role-models for adapting to positive social norms in social settings where for instance violence and substance abuse are the norm; however, a critical opportunity is being missed in that these young people are not being supported to transform the social landscape of their communities and the country beyond this role-modelling process. In placing social capital development alongside personal development, innovative leadership programmes can create opportunities for young leaders to cultivate what Granovetter calls “the strength of weak ties”; that is, individuals who are not solely tied to one particular network (for example a family, locality, or specific organisation) but who can move between groups and become bearers of new ideas, information, and innovation.

With the critical challenges of the post-apartheid era looming large in South Africa today a powerful, values-based, ethical and authentic cohort of young leaders are required not simply to model positive behaviour but to shape the very foundations of the South African public sphere. This myopia in current leadership development programmes for young South Africans is precisely the space into which the Leadership for a Winning Nation portfolio aims to develop and support catalytic interventions.
3 Leadership for a Winning Nation Portfolio Strategy

The DG Murray Trust’s Leadership for a Winning Nation portfolio is uniquely placed to support and develop catalytic interventions in the field of youth leadership, and youth development more broadly. Through approaching leadership development not simply through as a process of developing a young person’s individual skills but rather as a mechanism to promote young people as drivers of system-wide community and social innovation, DGMT has the potential to develop unique mechanisms in the youth leadership development field.

In order to support this kind of system-wide transformation, the strategic direction of the portfolio will be shaped along four key areas (see the portfolio strategy schematic in Appendix A):

1) Developing a flagship national youth leadership programme;
2) Securing the environment for young people to lead;
3) Supporting youth leadership pipelines; and
4) Investing in programmes that connect young people to opportunity and influence.

Through this four-pronged strategy, the portfolio aims to develop a cohort of at least 1,000 entrepreneurial young leaders, committed to public innovation, to drive transformation and delivery for the public benefit. The specific sectors where young people can and should drive public innovation have been identified as education, the environment, youth development and broader social development. Cutting across these sectors are the questions of HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence (and gender-relations more broadly), and disability.

3.1 Flagship Programme: The Leadership Incubator

The flagship programme of the portfolio is the Leadership Incubator which is developing a unique, high-quality programme to develop a national cohort of young leaders starting in 2012. The programme is being developed by a highly-skilled team of experts in leadership and youth development, large-scale training interventions, and organisational development (Chris Meintjes, James Thomas, Barry Kayton, Landy Wright, Lezerine Mashaba and Charissa Shay). The goal of the Leadership Incubator is to spark public innovation by charging up a network of young leaders so that they can link the poles of South African society. The programme will over a five-year period connect 5,000 innovative young leaders from marginalized communities to one another and to points of influence and opportunity across social and economic divides. They will be selected on the basis of their proven commitment to the public good, and their abilities will be developed and directed to some of the toughest social problems faced by their

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39 The Leadership Incubator an interim name for the organisation.
communities. The premise of this initiative is that new connections to information, opportunity and influence can be a powerful catalyst for innovation in highly polarized societies. If directed to the public good, these connections can strengthen development and democracy by building trust and accountability and making people less tolerant of destructive risk.

The heart of the programme is a series of residential leadership development modules, reaching an initial target of 500 young people in 2012, and growing to an alumni network of over 5000 young people by 2017. Core to the goals of the programme is the development of this cohort into an active, engaged, and innovative network with a presence. The three residential modules follow the model of ‘Developing Self’ → ‘Building a Network’ → ‘Engaging with Context’. Through ensuring that the modules developed are fully accredited to an appropriate NQF level, this programme with provide its participants, especially those most marginalised, with the ability to access further opportunities. Alongside these three modules, the participants in the programme will work collaboratively on projects to tackle critical issues in their communities, engage with leading thinkers on some of the critical socio-political challenges in South Africa, and undertake continuing self-development activities assisted by the training team. Through this process of self-development, working effectively with others, and tackling critical issues in South African society, the programme aims to build a group of young leaders able to be points of influence and innovation throughout South Africa’s public, private and civil society sectors.

The outputs of this programme will most tangibly be felt in the network of vibrant and engaged young leaders contributing to, and driving, public innovation. Beyond this, however, the programme aims to shift the discourse around the role and opportunities for young people in South African society, provide excellent role models of committed and creative problem-solvers, and begin modelling a shift in all sectors of society towards proactive, innovative solutions. Ultimately, the aim is to see increased efficacy in service delivery through instilling innovation at critical points, increased accountability for service delivery through activating young people’s voices, and the expansion of opportunity for young people to be powerful agents of innovation across South Africa and beyond.
In a risk analysis of the Leadership Incubator programme the key areas with high-risk potential are the dependency of the programme on funding, a potentially hostile political environment, a somewhat centralised leadership structure, and competing programmes. Overall, the programme had a low risk potential of around 27%. Key methods to mitigate against these risks are: to secure substantial co-funding and find innovative ways to reduce the resource-intensity of the programme; enrol key players in the youth development sector to ensure that the programme is welcomed across the board; ensure the strength of leadership across the full development team; and finally to engage with the broad spectrum of leadership programmes and ensure buy-in to the notion of a large-scale national intervention.

The uniqueness of this programme lies in Otto Scharmer’s description that leadership development should be about igniting a field of inspired connection and action. By putting the development of a cohort of young leaders at the forefront of the programme’s objectives, the programme hopes to build a leadership programme that functions beyond the individual technical skills of each participant and into the broader network. The budgetary implications of such an intensive programme are significant. Over the next four years projected rise from R3mill for the programme development (2011), to an estimated R14-mill for 500 participants in 2012, R20-mill for 750 participants in 2013 and R27-mill for 1,000 participants in 2014. The vast majority of costs relate to the transport and accommodation for participants during the programme.

3.2 Securing the Environment for Young People to Lead

As highlighted throughout this concept paper, the public perception of young people largely defines and marginalises them to at worst the root cause of social upheaval and at best the beneficiaries of youth development programmes. There is scarce public acknowledgement of the actual, and potential, contribution that young people can make to their communities and the country at-large. In order to secure the environment for young people to lead effectively, therefore, a major shift in the public perception of young people needs to take place. This aspect of the Portfolio Strategy will seek to commission research into the contribution of young people to South Africa and specifically the ways in which they are leading in their schools, universities, communities and broader society. Further, it seeks to support advocacy for youth leadership and participation in decision-making, and to input into key policy debates around youth development. Moreover, the strategy seeks to promote

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40 Developed by Judy-Marie Smith.
collaboration between youth leadership development programmes, to share best-practices, and to grow the knowledge-base of the broader leadership development field around critical strategies to enable young people to play a leading role in South Africa. Finally, in order to broaden the public’s definitions of what constitutes youth leadership beyond the narrow confines of party-politics, measures will be taken to profile and highlight a diversity of young leaders from across the country. Success in this endeavour will reflect in a shift towards acknowledging young people valuable role-players and key assets in driving public innovation.

3.3 Youth Leadership Pipelines

Critical to the success of the flagship Leadership Incubator is the extent to which there are avenues by which young people have begun to experience what it feels like to take initiative, innovate and lead others in a process of contributing to the public good. The development of young leaders is not and cannot be a once-off intervention, but rather must be a process of accumulative development of responsibilities, self-development, social capital and initiative. Key projects within the framework of ‘youth leadership pipelines’ will specifically be targeted to support the key sectors identified in the broader framework – namely education, the environment, youth development and social development, with the cross-cutting issues of HIV/AIDS, gender-based-violence and disability included within those. Ideally these pipelines not only provide a valuable base from which to select participants for the Leadership Incubator programme, but can also bolster the aims and objectives of the other DGMT portfolios. For instance a youth-leadership project aimed at developing young people who are trained in ECD, or a youth-led initiative where high-school students read to pre-primary school children to boost literacy would be pipelines that reinforce both the leadership capacity of the young people and the aims and objectives of DGMT’s other focus areas. Leadership development is most successfully achieved through young people having the experience of leading, and it is the aim of this thrust to support programmes and initiatives that create those learning-by-doing environments.
3.4 Programmes that connect young people to opportunity and influence

A critical oversight in many youth leadership development programmes is the question of what happens to young people as they exit the programme. Alarmingly, few interventions have robust tracking of their alumni or have measured the impact that their intervention has had on the ability of young people to access better opportunities, or influence public innovation. Thus, in order to ensure that participants have opportunities to exert influence, this thrust of the strategy aims to identify and support initiatives that provide young people with direct connection to opportunity, access to influence and real decision-making power. As mentioned earlier in this paper, for example, the Quebec government’s youth investment funds are fully determined by elected young people from across civil society providing the young people themselves with the opportunity to directly make decisions about youth development priorities and have the financial clout to invest funds accordingly. Programmes that shift away from tokenistic models of youth participation in decision-making towards robust mechanisms for young people to access opportunity and influence should be developed and supported to ensure that high-calibre young innovators can be directed to points where they can have the most impact on their communities and beyond.
Conclusion

In order to move South Africa beyond a single narrative of its youth – that they are unruly, uneducated, unemployed and violent – we have to start asking ourselves and our communities what contribution young people are, and could be, making. The Leadership for a Winning Nation portfolio provides a unique vehicle to begin shifting these perceptions and ultimately the place of young people in our society. During apartheid young people recognised that they could, and must, change the way in which the country was running. They did not simply accept that they would be a lost generation, but stood up and fought for a better quality of life that would create and provide opportunities for all. More recently, the young people that took to the streets of Tunisia and Egypt realised that by making themselves heard, by refusing to accept that it was not their place to change their countries’ destinies have shaken the foundations of the Middle East. As Libyan people face massacre in Benghazi, and protestors continue to make themselves heard in Yemen and Bahrain, the zeitgeist of the world has radically shifted to an appreciation of the power of young people to bring about dramatic change. It is this realisation – that young people can be powerful innovators and leaders for their communities and the broader country – that underlies the strategy of the Leadership for a Winning Nation portfolio. This portfolio aims to support initiatives that promote young people as agents of their own, and their communities’, development; that shift the social perception of the role of young people in public life; that give young people access to influence; and to create a unique national intervention to develop a cohort of exceptional young people working together to drive public innovation.
References


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Appendix C

Leadership Interventions

Youth Leadership Pipelines
- Programmes that are youth-led/initiated
- Sector-specific programmes that emphasise and develop young leaders
- Youth service programmes that emphasise leadership development
- Intergenerational leadership initiatives

Programmes that Champion Youth Innovation/Leadership
- Programmes/forums that create access for young people to engage with and solve critical social challenges
- Programmes that spearhead youth leadership in public innovation
- Connection to meaningful opportunity for young leaders

Securing the Environment for Youth Leadership
- Research on leadership and youth development impact
- Input into key policy debates
- Advocacy for youth participation and leadership
- Raising the profile of young leaders

Appendix A: Leadership for a Winning Nation Schematic

Flagship Programme: Leadership Incubator

Cross-cutting issues such as gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, disabilities etc.