

**8 May 2018**



## Setting the scene

At its second meeting of 2018, BRIDGE’s Post-school Access Community of Practice continued to explore issues and initiatives relating to youth development and employment, this time focussing on career development.

Key speaker Letshego Mokeki, Director of Career Development Services (CDS) in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), described the work of the unit, locating this within a context of policy, national and individual needs, implementation challenges, lessons learned and plans for the future.

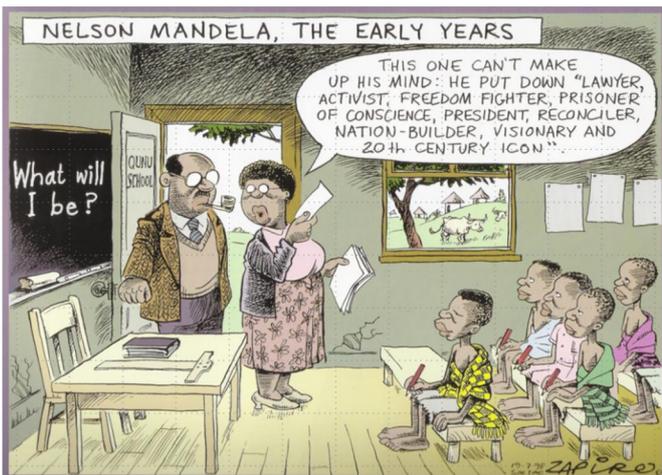
The session also featured regular CoP member Cecil Macheke of the National Business Initiative (NBI). Cecil shared lessons from demonstration projects on work readiness and NBI’s approach to career guidance and development, which emphasises early exposure to industry and enables young people to be better informed and better prepared to make subject, study and career choices.



## Overview of presentation

### **Implementation of DHET’s Career Development Plan: Lessons Learnt**

Letshego Mokeki set the tone for his presentation by locating the CDS’s work in the context of *releasing and realising the potential of all South Africans* (cf the preamble to the Constitution and the NDP). Contrary to the traditional one dimensional perspective, the CDS views career choice and development in multi-dimensional, lifelong terms.



Other social and economic drivers include the need to increase the return on education and training, reduce unemployment, especially among young people, and improve overall economic efficiency.

The CDS was formed in 2010 to take career guidance and development forward as a country. Its purpose is to bring coherence to the fragmented efforts being made by a range of government departments and other agencies, and to provide more equal access to quality information and services. Its approach is broad

and inclusive – its work is not limited to learners within the formal school and post-school systems, but includes the unemployed and underemployed, and encompasses people of all ages.

The unit is currently dealing with a variety of issues. A specific challenge is the lack of professionalisation in career development structures. In particular, Life Orientation teachers are not sufficiently equipped to provide relevant information about post school opportunities, or to guide learners' choices. The notion of career development for sustainable livelihood is a whole new area, which introduces a range of issues new to this field and calls for innovative solutions.

CDS's approach is also shaped by its mandate to coordinate and lead career development services on a national basis.

"Our country's needs are huge – no single government entity or agency will be able to deal with them alone. Our idea is to have a nationally coordinated career development service where you have quality career services delivered through multi-channelled services."

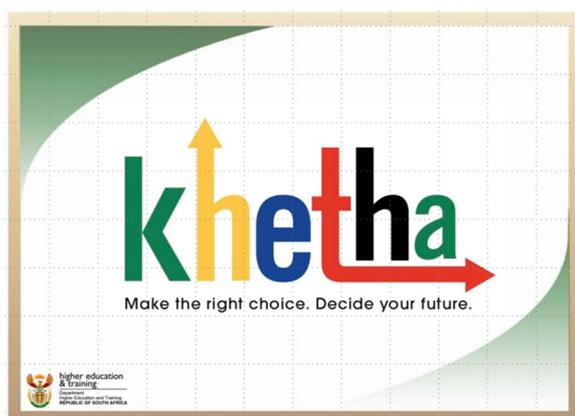
### Improving professionalism in career development services

The career development field distinguishes between career information, career advice/ guidance and career counselling. Practitioners perform these different roles and functions depending on their qualifications and expertise. CDS provides all three levels through its multi-channelled services.

CDS has developed norms and standards for the career development services system and a competency framework for career development practice. An occupational qualification for career development information officers (NQF L5) has also been developed. It is intended to ensure that Life Orientation teachers and TVET college support staff are professionally trained, and it is hoped that people in the NGO space (who are doing really good work) will also receive this training. Providers are currently being registered, and are expected to begin offering the qualification shortly.

CDS has also set up a national career development forum which is a structure where those involved in the field can meet to share experiences and determine how to take career development services forward.

Career Development Services uses its Khetha branding to promote its work. For more information on CDS's structure, programmes and services, see the presentation [here](#).



#### Key CDS messages:

- ✓ Careers are constructed, not chosen
- ✓ Lifelong learning is an essential requirement
- ✓ Career development is a personal responsibility
- ✓ Career development services are beneficial, and must be made accessible, to everyone
- ✓ To be meaningful, information has to be sufficiently detailed

#### Some key aspects of CDS's engagement model:

- i) Direct contact
  - CDS has a national helpline with an sms 'please call me' service (one of the more popular channels)

- An outreach team reaches up to 200000 learners a year through exhibitions, information sessions, school visits, and life skills programmes
- CDS is currently setting up a network of Khetha walk-in centres throughout the country. These will be co-hosted or will partner with existing centres, e.g. DBE teacher resource centres, Department of Social Development walk-in sites.

ii) Online platforms

- Careerhelp is a wide-ranging 'one stop' information resource covering all career-related matters. It caters for users of all ages and interests.
- The Information Hub provides resources for teachers and other career development practitioners as well as a discussion forum to encourage knowledge sharing.
- NCAP – the National Career Advice Portal is a free online self-help tool and comprehensive resource for learners, students, unemployed youth, parents, career practitioners and workers looking to make career changes. It features over 1400 occupations or careers, each with a detailed learning pathway to facilitate informed decision making on career and study options.

**Useful Tip:** CDS is currently adding videos to illustrate the 1400 occupations featured on NCAP – over 700 have been uploaded to date. They are proving useful and popular. The videos are OERs and may be downloaded.

- To assist with subject and career choices, NCAP includes self-exploration and interest questionnaires which generate reports and provide options based on responses. Reports are action-based to help with decision making, and there is an option to request an advisor call-back to help interpret the results. There is also a 'subject chooser tool' which links subjects to careers and vice versa.

iii) Publications

CDS also produces a number of publications e.g. an 'apply now' booklet/ post-school guide, of which a million copies are distributed to public high schools every year.

iv) Radio Programmes

Khetha's weekly radio programmes are presented in all the official languages and are an important way of extending CDS's reach [currently limited to the SABC, for reasons of cost]. CDS is open to having other entities use this platform for nationally relevant topics.

v) Partnering

CDS views partnerships as critical for increasing the reach and impact of career development services. It has partnered with NGOs, CBOs, companies and other government departments and agencies, and would welcome further opportunities to partner.

vi) Training and resourcing of intermediaries

This includes training of Life Orientation teachers and TVET student support services staff. All tools and resources are open source and may be downloaded and used, provided they are not used for commercial purposes. CDS has developed a career resource for Life Orientation teachers that aligns with the CAPS curriculum for grades 9 - 12. It is due to be published in June and will then be rolled out to schools.

## In the pipeline:

CDS is working on:

- Linking NCAP to the online Central Applications Service that government is currently working on – this will ensure that applicants go through a career development process before they apply. [Government intends to regulate this so there will be a single online fee, although applications will be sent to all relevant institutions.]
- Having entities such as NSFAS and Funza Lushaka use NCAP to filter the application process – this will reduce challenges relating to people who lack the appropriate attributes going into teaching because bursaries are available. [NCAP is designed for inter-operability, to allow other systems to plug in.]
- Setting up a new M&E team and developing an impact evaluation framework
- Broadening access to online services by securing zero-rated access to the online platforms with all telecommunications companies
- Developing a business case for setting up CDS as a separate component of government (while still reporting to DHET) which will give CDS broader scope

## Challenges and lessons learnt:

- Career development services remain poorly funded, even within large institutions and government departments. Often there is no specific person appointed to lead career development service activities. This makes coordination with those companies and departments difficult.
- Career exhibitions are often ineffective. CDS has piloted a number of models in an effort to improve quality and impact.
- Despite the deliberately rural bias in CDS's approach, this remains a quality challenge because of the difficult logistics in rural areas.

**Contacting Career Development Services**

- SMS:** "Please call me" to 072 204 5056 and a Career Advisor will call you back
- Telephone:** Call the helpline on 086 999 0123 (Mon-Fri: 08:00-16:00)
- Website:** [www.careerhelp.org.za](http://www.careerhelp.org.za) or follow the link on the DHET website homepage – the website includes links to NCAP and the Information Hub
- National Career Advice Portal:** Get information on career paths, where to study and what to study at <http://ncap.careerhelp.org.za> or follow the link from the Careerhelp website
- Twitter:** Follow us on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/sacareerhelp>

Participants wanted to know whether career information is being aligned with the needs of the economy and whether this is made clear, so that we do not have unemployed graduates?

Mr Mokekei noted that occupations identified by the DHET as 'in high demand' are to be found on NCAP, but CDS is still working on integrating the information in such a way that it will show the extent to which an occupation is in high demand.

Icons are used to show particular trades that are in high demand or in the green economy, but CDS is also working to break this information down further. CDS also wants to show the skills that are in high demand, and to link these to particular occupations.

CDS is also having discussions with Youth Employment Services (YES) to inform them about what has been done, and to look for possible opportunities for working together.

Asked on how organisations such as CBOs and NGOs can liaise with DHET / CDS, Letshego Mokeki invited organisations to contact him. He will then share the contact details of colleagues leading the various initiatives so people can get in touch with them.

On the use of media for outreach purposes, Mr Mokeki highlighted that CDS's partnership with the SABC is made possible by SABC Education, which subsidises the costs to a certain extent. Commercial radio stations are hugely expensive - CDS simply can't afford them. CDS piloted for 6 months with 54 community radio stations throughout the country, but again this very expensive for CDS and they ended up staying with SABC as it is what they can afford. However, CDS is exploring a number of ways to get there. They are developing a cost sharing model which they hope will allow them to get into some of the commercial radio stations, e.g. by partnering with Microsoft or a SETA or university, to share the costs of going on air.

### ***NBI's approach to career development: Why Early Intervention Matters***

The National Business Initiative (NBI) is a member-based organisation of 80 - 100 South African (mainly corporate) and multinational companies, which works towards sustainable growth and development in South Africa through responsible business action. A key interest area is business's contribution to social and economic transformation. Some of NBI's work in this area relates to skills development and includes implementing demonstration projects to test ideas.

NBI's approach is purpose-driven and hinges on "ensuring that the learners we take through the process end up somewhere" i.e. ready for tertiary education or the world- of-work and/or self-employment.



If you would like to read more about NBI's work in this area:

<http://www.nbi.org.za/focus-areas/social-sustainability/skills-development/>

Cecil Macheke's presentation illustrated the importance for career guidance and development of:

... early intervention



Many graduates are ignorant about working conditions and occupations in their fields of study. Introducing learners to workplace activities and operations as early as grade 7 or 8 reduces the incidence of poorly informed, inappropriate choices.

... immersion in companies and workplace activities



Taking young learners into workplaces opens their eyes to the wide range of occupations and activities that make up the world of work. They are then better able to make decisions about subject, study and career choices.

... realistic expectations



Exposure to workplaces – and to those doing the work – brings young people in touch with on-the-job experiences and enables them to form more realistic expectations.

... partnerships



Taking young learners into workplaces requires structured links and relationships between schools, industry, enterprise development, post-school education and training institutions, and parents. The active, voluntary and wholehearted involvement of industry and business is key.

... a structured approach



The interface between learner and company has to be planned and managed. Appropriate placement based on learner attributes is an important first step when hosting TVET college learners (and graduates). Ongoing support must be provided – this should include life skills, career coaching, mentoring and planning for FET or tertiary studies.

... networks and mentoring



Exposure to workplaces also has the important benefit of giving learners access to networks – crucial for accessing employment – and to mentoring relationships which are crucial for building careers.

... entrepreneurial awareness



Young people won't all be absorbed into formal employment, and many will need to create their own livelihoods. Social entrepreneurship offers possibilities for companies to engage with community players around local needs and assist young people to look into these as potential pathways for development.

... a future-focus



How do we give wise career guidance when the world-of-work is changing? If jobs of the future will be different, what is it that we should be skilling our learners into now? In terms of technical trades, we can anticipate that soft skills such as problem solving will be important, as will hard skills relating to IRM (installation, maintenance, repair), which should be taught at a broad basic level to enable later specialisation as needs arise.



## Discussion

The following points were raised by CoP members in the discussion following the presentations and group discussions:

- The point about preparing for the future is a critical one. IBM is engaging with the CSIR, universities and the GDE to map skills that will be required in the future, with the aim of informing curriculum development. IBM is keen to involve/ partner with NGOs and other stakeholders in this initiative.
- We all need to develop creativity within ourselves, and to be entrepreneurs in our own spheres. If we can help learners (and others) to develop that capacity, they will find a place in the world for themselves and be able to add to, as opposed to extract from, the system where we are creating a sustainably intelligent future.
- One participant wanted to know whether any other participant at the CoP remembered the Critical Cross-field Outcomes (CCFOs? SAQA deemed them to be 'critical for the development of the capacity for life-long learning' – which will become even more important in the future.  
[http://fidspace.org.za/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Learning-Programmes\\_FAQ\\_Question\\_4.pdf](http://fidspace.org.za/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Learning-Programmes_FAQ_Question_4.pdf)
- A mistake we often make when young people show interest in 'risky' occupations (e.g. hip-hop), is to block the direction they want to go. Instead, we need to help them explore related opportunities, to reinforce their confidence, and to help them be realistic, without shutting them down.
- The 'what and how' of messages communicated by university career centres also need to change. Students need to understand that career development is life-long; that their initial career choice need not be forever, and that making a choice doesn't mean they cannot continue to grow and change, and bridge to another path. Students also need to know that career paths need not be one-dimensional – for example, a Wits Engineering degree has higher status, but someone could follow another route to get to that same point. Another important message is about managing transitions and failure by understanding what needs to be done differently.
- Soft skills have to be addressed at the school level so that young people coming out of the school system have these base skills with which to advance in life and in their broader careers (e.g. relationship skills, knowing how to present themselves).
- In order to address the skills needs of the market and the economy, industry and business must be able to influence the curriculum – which will mean education working in partnership. Much of what will be needed is already being done in some way, but is not yet effective on the ground. These advances have to be implemented and activated to give them life.

- In comparison with other African or developing countries, South Africa does not have the problem of a lack of resources – they are just badly distributed and there is no accountability in the way they are used (for e.g. Afghanistan, a war-torn country has better levels of maths performance). We also have to take into account the differences that exist between different parts of the country (what we take for granted in Gauteng doesn't apply in the Northern Cape).
- It is important to make online educational resources as accessible as possible to underdeveloped and disadvantaged areas. Once they are available online, no further funds will be needed for those resources and the money can be used for other needs.
- It would be really useful to have a directory of companies willing to host school visits and speakers from different professions, and not have to rely only on one's personal contacts.
- In view of the large numbers of young people who drop out of school, it is important for career development not only to concentrate on academic areas, but also to address skills needs in non-academic areas.



## Facilitator's reflections on the CoP

In her conclusion, the Facilitator observed that the presentations and discussions revealed the layers of complexity within these issues, but also the linkages across them. She highlighted that some common messages came through quite strongly, such as the importance of information, and the need to dispel some of the myths around career decisions. Participants were challenged to ensure these messages get out to those who need them.

'The two speakers' inputs were very valuable and give us hope for cohesion in this field. They also encourage people to connect and to build on existing platforms, rather than creating new ones', she remarked.

## Attendees

| Name & surname: | Organisation:                | Name & surname:   | Organisation:                               |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Benita Williams | BWEC                         | Letshego Mokeki   | Department of Higher Education and Training |
| Benter Okelo    | BRIDGE                       | Lisa Ann Catano   | Onatah – Bullying specialist                |
| Cecil Macheke   | National Business Initiative | Madeleine Lekhula | Kutlwanoong                                 |
| Dudu Makhari    | Click Foundation             | Margie Vorwerk    | BRIDGE                                      |
| Edcent Williams | Amoriway Pty. Ltd.           | Moipone Maleka    | CDE   |
| Edzai Zvobwo    | Math Gee                     | Morgan Mosoane    | Kutlwanoong                                 |
| Farrah Quarmby  | Refilwe                      | Paul Nhunzvi      | Maths Centre                                |
| Fundiswa Sayo   | Zenex Foundation             | Raj Naran         | Wits University                             |
| Gomo Segwe      | Kutlwanoong                  | Rezana Hoosain    | Wits University                             |
| Harold Sebose   | Online App                   | Thato Masiangoako | CDE   |
| Ida Meyer       | University of Pretoria       | Thuli Mashiyane   | help2read                                   |
| Irene Miya      | Izibuko Primary School       | Zarina Khan       | Facilitator                                 |
| Jade Pieterse   | BRIDGE                       | Jenny Dry         | Institute for Balanced Living               |