CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONS IN POST SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

SUBMITTED

BY

CEPD

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1. INTRODUCTION

The proposal is a response to the call made by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in 2013 for a need to develop the capacity of student leaders in the post school institutions. Although student organizations, and their leaders have played a central role in the fight against apartheid, their voices continue to fade in the transformation debates post apartheid, for a variety of reasons, including their capacity to deal with a myriad of issues and challenges that have emerged in the new context. The proposal is framed to provide support to students, especially leaders in student representative councils (SRCs) in public universities and Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (VCET) colleges, with capacity to meaningfully contribute towards the creation of a new unity behind the principles of democracy, transformation, multi-cultural communities, free learning communities and the promotion of citizenship.

While SRCs are taken as a point of departure for the proposed activities, it is acknowledged that most institutions have politically aligned civic organizations and identity-specific groups such as cultural, religious, sports, academic and forums, all of which any proposal for student leadership development need to consider. To the extent possible, these organization or bodies will be drawn in to participate in the various activities proposed.

The project of this nature, size and scope requires the collaboration and energies drawn from multiple partners including student bodies, specialized institutions, expert individuals and experienced campaigners. Since its establishment in the early 1990s, the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) has been instrumental in mobilizing the capacity to support the activities of the nature proposed in this document, and has deep understanding of the education and training landscape in South Africa. CEPD will draw on a team of skilled and experienced personnel, from its internal staff, partners and associates to deliver on the proposed activities.

This proposal is also a result of a series of discussions between the CEPD and the major national unions of SRCs in post school institutions; namely South African Union of Students (SAUS) and the South African Further Education and Training Colleges Association (SAFETSA) as well as the officials in the Department of Higher Education and Training.

2. BACKGROUND AND STATUS ANALYSIS

Since 1994, the education system in South Africa has undergone major restructuring processes aimed at improving access to quality education, and skills development and the democratization project broadly. In the post school education and training landscape, the multiple processes and projects undertaken culminated in the review and development of policies and legislation that sought to remove all systematic barriers that inhibited the millions of South Africans from enjoying accessible and quality post-school education and training opportunities. Notably, with regard to higher education, government merged some of the universities, a process aimed at eliminating the inequalities and systemic segregation based on class, race, gender and territorial divides. To date, the sub-sector boasts 25 universities with 65 campuses. These exclude over 100 UNISA satellite campuses. Enrolment in higher education has grown exponentially since 1994. Between 2008 and 2012, for example, enrolment rose from about 799 000 to about 954 000.

As part of the process of dismantling apartheid and entrenching democracy, measures were taken early on to infuse broad based participation in the governance and management of institutions. In this regard, the Higher Education Act of 1997 provides for the establishment of SRCs in universities. Consequently, each of the universities has an elected SRC, and in cases where institutions have multiple-campuses, local/branch SRCs have been installed. In total, SRC community averages 540 members. This does not include UNISA SRC members, which may be projected to be in excess of 1000 if SRCs in satellite campuses were to be included. The Act summarily outlines the different roles and functions that SRCs are expected to perform including the following:

- Representation at Council of each institution to advise the Council on the matters related to the implementation of the provisions of the Higher Education Act (HEA) applicable to public higher education;
- Representation at Senate in which they should contribute towards and advice council on the development of academic and research functions of the university;
- Selection of candidates for senior management positions;
- Fostering of an institutional culture which promotes tolerance and respect for fundamental human rights and creates an appropriate environment for teaching, research and learning; and
- Perform such other functions as may be delegated or assigned to it by the Council.

In their endeavour to unify and strengthen their voices, the SRCs in universities have organized themselves under a voluntary national formation: South African Union of Students (SAUS). SAUS' core mandate is to provide support to SRCs in institutions to ensure that they perform their various functions effectively.

Following the establishment of the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2009, a reconfiguration of the landscape has occurred, which has included the transfer of Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (VCET) colleges (formerly Further Education and Training Colleges) and other special type institutions to the newly established ministry. Championed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, and fully supported by the Executive, the new Ministry undertook to restructure and mainstream the VCET sub-sector. As a result, enrolment in colleges has shot-up dramatically in the last few years. For example, whereas the colleges enrolled 340 000 student in 2011, this had shot up to more than 650 000 in 2012 (DHET, 2014). This was also made possible by capital injection towards infrastructure development and student funding.

Policy provides for the establishment of SRCs in colleges as well. In order to support the work of SRCs, SRCs at college level have also established their own national association: the South African Further Education and Training Students Association (SAFETSA).

3. CONTEXT

Since the 1990s, there has been an increased global attention to the role of student organizations and leadership promotion and practices on democracy, human rights and social justice. In South Africa, student organizations and leaders played a key role in the fight against apartheid, and mobilizing around student issues. More recently, they have played a pivotal role in lobbying for policies and programmes that address the challenges facing the education and training system, promoting institutional democracy, and in contributing to progressive political initiatives at central government level. At a more practical level, students have undertaken struggles to support economically neglected and excluded groups to access education, while also helping increase accountability and equity in broader society. Student organizations continue to play a critical role in transformation processes in areas of access to institutions and financial support, academic performance, retention, accommodation and integration

However, student organizations have not been able to respond effectively to some of the contemporary challenges. Part of the explanation for this is the general apathy amongst students, differences in structure and composition of SRC across institutions (especially in terms of whether an institution is historically black or white, English or Afrikaans medium, or even university or college), the trappings of power and leadership (including access to resources and with reported incidents of fraud, corruption and maladministration) and general unpreparedness to handle the challenges that come with functional leadership.

If student organizations are to successfully and effectively negotiate these new challenges and fulfill their mandates, their leaders require the skills and capacity to navigate the new context in the ever changing environment. Both universities and colleges are better placed to become incubators of young leaders.

4. RATIONALE

Research by the CEPD (CEPD, 2005) revealed that there are few[1], in any, purposeful national leadership development programmes for students in South Africa. As a result, sometimes, students leadership possess limited knowledge about issues they are required to engage with, resulting in some level of dissatisfaction and frustration with processes, for example, in relation to budget discussions at Council level. They invariably end up not understanding budgetary procedures, thereby becoming unable to formulate clear questions about the information they are confronted with and unable to respond appropriately and meaningfully to developments in society and institutions. The net result for them involves a sense of uncertainty about how they should take up issues related to a myriad of issues they are supposed to address, be it in relation to tuition fees increases, accommodation, and issues that directly impact on their constituencies.

Further, consultations with the leadership of the two national student unions (SAUS and SAFETSA) have revealed that their functionality and effectiveness are constrained by, amongst other issues, lack of funding, research capacity and general administrative support. This consequently impacts on their ability to undertake their mandated programmatic activities.

Studies in the US have also indicated that leadership skills acquired during college life enhance self-efficacy, civic engagement, character development, academic performance and personal development. It contributes towards an acquisition of civic orientations that acculturates students to participate in and keep democracy strong, exercise their rights and to discharge their responsibilities with necessary knowledge and skills[2] (Branson 1998)**.** The learning process assumes the mission to foster citizens with spirit to lead.

A national study on Developing Leadership Capacity in College Students[3] in the US for example, noted the following effects:

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[1] It should be noted that some universities do have programmes aimed at developing leadership capacity of their students.

[2] Branson, Margaret S. (1998). The Role of Civic Education: A forthcoming Education Policy Task Force Position Paper from the Communitarian Network, Washington, DC: Centre for Civic Education (retrieved June 2014 from http://www.civiced.org/articles_role.html)

[3] Dungan, J.P., & Komives, S.R. (2007). Developing Leadership Capacity in College Students: Findings from a national study. A Report from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership. College Park, MD: National Clearing house for Leadership programs (Retrieved June 2014 from www.nclp.umd.edu)

- A paradigm shift in the leadership theory and philosophy;
- Engendering of volunteerism, service learning and civic engagement movement; and
- Empowerment of social identity groups and distinct leadership needs.

It is therefore arguably justified that the purposeful development of student leadership capacity will inevitably lay a foundation for future leaders in the various spheres of the society, including civic, public and private sector, in addition to improving their current practices. Such capacity will also impact on a wide range of civil life, governance, policy, philosophy, equity, diversity and corporate environments.

By supporting the development of leadership capacity of students at post school institutions, CEPD also hopes to effectively contribute towards entrenching the emergent democratic culture and practices, both in institutions and in our society.

5. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Despite the excitement that student leadership development discourse and the attention it has generated, very little empirical evidence is available to inform a purposeful practice upon which interventions should be made. However, there is a large body of research on leadership, and leadership development, which points to various perspectives on the subject. These range from managerialist to situational leadership and more poignantly transformative leadership.

Effective leadership is, however, commonly understood to involve creating a climate and ability for people to achieve things that they normally would not without it; premised on engaging people in their personal capacities to identify with set expectations and mobilise resources within them and their present environment and means to meet them, especially in trying circumstances. Hardly does effective leadership ever manifest outside its ability to succeed in the face of tough challenges by making sense of chaos and adversity and providing a point of stability and direction. Leadership also requires:

- Vision and an ability to personify and give life to a cause and usher a creative tension between the desired future and the current future so as to propel people into action towards the desired future.

- Relating the past, interpreting the present and preparing people for the future by explaining this and contextualizing changes and circumstances to their followers in an engaging rather than patronizing manner.

- Crossing boundaries and building bridges linking different constituencies;

- Interrogating ethical issues and striving to be exemplary in terms of principles and behaviors that resonate with their cause or best fit their organisation's mandate; and

- Understanding the systemic context in which they operate and accommodate opposing constructs without giving in to paralysis.

Leadership development

The literature[4] suggest that leadership development should be multifaceted, and encompass theoretical and practical elements; curricular and co-curricular, functional, underpinned by ongoing research and continuous improvement. It should also include a variety of activities, such as mentorship programmes (which involves creating opportunities for shadowing executive leaders) and development of tailor-made and targeted programmes. Effective leadership development also requires commensurate organizational culture to be cultivated, and developing learning communities.

6. STRATEGY

A multi-pronged strategy is proposed to provide a holistic student leadership development, rooted in continuous monitoring and feedback. It will include seminars, workshops and conferences, mentorship opportunities, research and administrative support

6.1   Training workshops

This aspect of the programme will be multi-dimensional and will include regular seminars and workshops targeting the leadership of SAUS and SAFETSA, selected members of SRCs from respective institutions, as well as individuals serving in leadership structures of

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[4] See for example, Mathews P, Moorman H and Nusche D, 2007. School leadership development strategies: Building leadership capacity in Victoria: A case study report for OECD activity on improving school leadership http://www.oecd.org/edu/schoolleadership

other types of students organizations. The identification of participants in the workshops and seminars will be done by key role-players in the programme. Workshops and seminars will be organized regionally (in clusters) and will be organized separately for colleges and universities. The workshops will cover a range of themes, including the following:

- **Co-operative governance**: Include a focus on principles, history and philosophies underpinning the concept of co-operative governance in South Africa.
- **Diversity:** To focus on dealing with issues of diversity, tolerance, and other cross cutting themes such as human rights and social justice.
- **Policies and regulations:** To include a focus on national policies governing the post school sector, such as the White Paper on Post School Education and Training, The Higher Education Act, 1997, as well as institutional policies and policy making
- **Conflict and conflict management**: To include a focus and strategies on dealing with conflict and conflict situations.
- **Leadership:** Leadership theories and practices, including communication skills, etc.
- **Democratic participation:** To include a focus on building democratic ethos and participation.

Primary focus is on the SRCs, although leadership of other student organizations, from which SRCs are largely drawn, will be considered.

The above list is not exhaustive, and other themes may be added over the duration of the project.

Each of these workshop and seminar themes will be facilitated by people with expertise, knowledge and skills in the respective areas. Memoranda of understanding/ agreements will be entered into with relevant institutions/ service providers to design specialized programmes linked to the topical issues to be covered in the programme. Such institutions and individuals will be selected based on their ability to demonstrate their expertise and capacity to deliver such programmes. Such institutions will develop the workshops and seminar materials, as well as facilitate the workshops.

The most appropriate facilitators will be identified with the assistance of the advisory committee.

6.2 Mentorships and coaching

CEPD, in partnership with key other role-players in the programme, will facilitate the process of sourcing mentorship opportunities for student leaders in various organizations, as well as provide certain coaching and mentorship to student leaders. For example, opportunities will be sought from experts to assist student organization to write fund-raising proposals, and involve some of the leaders in project management activities. For student leaders serving in the national associations, opportunities will be identified so that they can serve on boards and governing bodies of various organizations as part of their leadership development processes.

6.3 Research

Research support projects will form an integral component of the entire programme. This component will be geared towards collecting and documenting existing student leadership capacity development activities in the country and internationally, with a view to informing the programme. The research will be done in collaboration with interested parties including CEPD's partners, associates, student associations and the Department of Higher Education and Training. It is worth noting that there is currently no reliable data on the status of student leadership development in the country, and therefore this component of the project will also play a role in collecting relevant data for future use. In addition, this component of the programme will be used to train student leaders, especially those in the national associations, in research.

Research approaches and methodologies will be considered based on the nature of unfolding events to strengthen the project.

6.4 Building and Strengthening organizational capacity and effectiveness

The programme will also include support to the two national organizations (SAUS and SAFETSA) to establish their offices and operational system as well as support them in and building their capacity to manage their affairs and those of their constituencies. This will take the form of providing funding for the establishment of a functional office, with the required infrastructure and personnel. CEPD will provide ongoing support to strengthen the capacity of these organizations, including in the areas of strategic planning, and internal policy development.

It is envisaged that the 2 associations will share offices and an administrator.

Part of the funding will go towards a stipend for the full time officials (mostly general secretaries)

6   PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The project will be structured with core project team and an advisory group.

a) Core project team

The CEPD will establish a core team, led by a programme manager for core project team will be responsible for the day to day co-ordination of the programme activities, including logistical arrangements. Sheri Hamilton will be the project manager, and work closely with Paul Kgobe.

b) Advisory committee

 The advisory committee group will assist in reviewing the programme and its activities. It will also provide strategic support for the programme. The advisory group will meet at least twice a year, and will include representatives from:

- DHET
- SAUS
- SAFETSA
- National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)
- SACPO
- SAIVCET (Once established)

8.   DURATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The programme is envisaged to be three years. At the end of the project period, and a detailed report will be submitted to the Ministry of Higher Education and Training, with recommendations on how to institutionalize the program.

9.   Budget

The total budget required for the implementation of this project is approximately R3million.