

Revamp the Setas

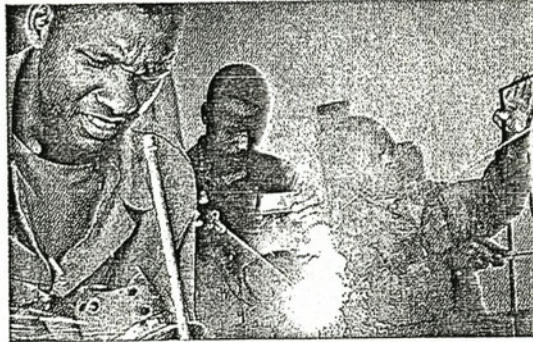
Five years down the line, posh buildings, quality furniture, hefty salaries, cars and an army of experts later, what have the sector education & training authorities (Setas) achieved?

The training levy, of which 20% goes to the skills fund and a further 10% to the 26 local Setas, leaves 70% to be utilised for what we as business people understood would be staff training.

Instead, we have an army of Seta employees around the country acting as go-betweens between companies and training establishments that are accredited by Seta employees who may never have had experience in the skills they are supposedly accrediting.

Meanwhile, employers still have to pay to send their staff to training schools and colleges, accredited by the Setas, to enable them to recover a small percentage of their additional expensive training costs back from their levies — 12-18 months after the event, and even then not covering the training costs. Is this advantageous to business?

With all the money collected — and remember some of it is not even used — why can't the Setas set up training houses of their own and allow employers to send employees for training on a free-of-charge ba-



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sis? Numbers could be limited to a percentage of staff employed. Seta employees should then be qualified instructors rather than ideological pen pushers. This way all employers contributing to the Seta coffers would receive some benefit from their contributions. As it stands, a lot of employers pay

their levies but just cannot afford to cover the additional costs of training. They then wait one to two years to recover some of their money.

Isn't it time for the system to be reviewed, the deadwood to be cut, funds to be used to the maximum benefit of the contributors, and the scheme to be made less expensive and more useful to employers and employees alike?

By the way, the tax benefits are not as good as advertised, so hopefully the Setas will not beat the drum on that issue.

Jim Caunter, Ex-skills development facilitator, via e-mail

PPP responsibility shared

Your article on public-private partnerships (PPPs) was well balanced in that it pointed out (*Features* March 14) what the genuine efficiency gains associated with private-sector delivery under well-structured long-term contracts with government were.

You rightly point to the need to reduce turnaround times in closing projects. But it is not so much that “government is

taking too much time to negotiate PPP deals”. It is rather a shared responsibility, and the delays emanate as much from government's side as from the private party. Both sides need to up their game for the PPP's procurement channel to grow. The four-year timeframe you cited is actually from project inception to financial close, with negotiations taking up to a year. This is not good enough, and several reforms on the cards should help

to quicken the pace. Note, however, that conventionally built infrastructure projects take equally long to procure, only the PPP approach is more transparent.

Taz Chaponda, Pretoria

Fidentia chickens come home

Once upon a time a farmer invested in a hen house and 10 hens. Someone stole two of his hens and the farmer had to consider what had to be done. He decided he had one of two options.

First option: he could employ a fox to sort out the problem. The fox would eat five of the hens, sell the remaining three, give the money to the farmer and expect thanks for the payment. The farmer would then tear down the hen house as there would be no further use for it.

Second option: he could put a fence around the hen house to protect the hens that remain. He would then purchase a rooster; the rooster would reassure the hens and raise the alarm should there be any threat to them. In a short time the chickens that hatched would more than compensate for the lost hens and the investment would grow in value.

The question that arises is, what option was selected for Fidentia and why?

John Field, CEO, Fedbond

Party of new values

Barney Mthombazi's instincts are right (*Editor's Note* March 14). SA needs a political party that can challenge the ANC's hegemony. Getting one up and running will be a tough call.

A little party with huge potential that has had a bumpy start, but has been strengthened through its leadership and control battles, is the National Democratic Convention.

Based in KwaZulu Natal, it has a respected leader in the reverend Hawu Mbatha, a commercial farmer and businessman and former head of the SABC. Other activists are Frank Mdlalose, former premier of KZN, and his daughter, Makosazana, as well as Gavin Woods, chairman of parliament's select committee on public accounts when the arms scandal was probed.

Its core values are a market-based developmental economy, democracy and, with the fear of God, the restoration of family values. Maybe that isn't close

enough to the ANC, but most *FM* readers could live with those principles.
Graham McIntosh, Estcourt

SA is quota-obsessed

Gerald Majola, CEO of Cricket SA, must be living in cuckoo-land if he believes cricketers and sports people in general buy into the quota-obsessed transformation policies of the ANC.

SA is the only country in the world that selects players on ethnicity for national teams. Under normal circumstances, these quota players wouldn't be selected because they're simply not good enough to represent their country.

It seems as if the country will continue its racist legacy of apartheid via the new buzzword of transformation, warmly embraced by those who now achieve greatness due to their ethnicity, not through merit. This quota madness has permeated every facet of the country and its institutions. It is social engineering aimed at unfair advantage for a select few, based on their race.

I'm sure South Africans by and large don't care who represents them at national level, as long as they are the best of the best, not quotas. Why must everything be demographically representative to be acceptable in SA?

Shame on you Majola and all your ANC mates who try to put a positive spin on transformation. It's an unworkable policy that perpetuates the failed policy of apartheid. Second-best never works in the real world, but it seems as if mediocrity rules supreme in the virtual world of Majola and others who embrace the new apartheid called transformation.
Peter Macadam, North Shore City, New Zealand



Towards SA Inc

"The soft underbelly" (*Editor's Note* March 14) as well as your editorials "Stand up please, commissioner" and "Mboweni should sit on his hands" in the same issue, succinctly deal with SA's everyday news, the topics of everyone's conversation. How much more negative can we become?

You accurately state that leadership is "among other things, about integrity, trust and judgment", and, referring to crime, that "[the] absence of national leadership is now a scandal".

It is time, therefore, to start a new opposition party. Let us list "SA Inc" as party where we are all shareholders and in which the bosses work for us and will be fired should they screw up.

After all, running a country is the same as running a big business. With all the resources and expertise of this beautiful country, SA Inc has formidable potential. Imagine taking on the world with this strategy, compared with the old-world concept of inept, corrupt windbags that go by the title of politician. (What is the qualification to be a politician?) Look no further than "branches" of SA Inc in the form of SA Breweries, Sasol, Grindrod, De Beers, BHP, Richemont, Naspers and Shoprite to name a few. They are run by CEOs and not politicians.

So as Mbeki shuffles off his tatty perch, let us, (after all "our fate is in our hands", to quote the editor) advertise the post of CEO of SA Inc (qualification: "integrity, trust and judgment"). I am sure we could entice the likes of Cyril Ramaphosa, Tokyo Sexwale, Patrice Motsepe or Daphne Mashile-Nkosi or even our intrepid astronaut to run SA Inc.

As CFO and CFM we need Tito Mboweni and Trevor Manuel. The production department needs a revamp. We cannot carry on dropping bolts, or volts, if we want to compete, so we need the experienced and visionary to run Eskom, Telkom, minerals & energy, trade & industry, safety & security, health, education. Are there any government structures not in need of an overhaul?
Bruce Mitchell, East London

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