

Youth Development in South Africa

DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ON CREATING A FAIRER SOCIETY

A fair society is one that is just, inclusive and embracing of all without any barriers to participation based on sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, ethnicity, age, class, ability or any other social difference. One where there is access to healthcare and education, technology, justice, strong institutions, peace and security, social protection, decent work and housing. But how can research truly contribute to creating global equity and diversity without showcasing diverse voices that are underrepresented in academia or paying specific attention to the Global South?

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Youth Development in South Africa: Harnessing the Demographic Dividend

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

1. *Oh! (step)children of the Empire, this grief is not yours*

*Oh! (step)children of the Empire, this grief is not yours
Weep not my child
Your cries of drum majorettes
Be not sorry for every season come to pass
Your nervous condition and position in the Empire
remains that of the periphery*

*Or are you trying to be human,
to 'give a human face to the world', when your humanist inclinations were cremated
by the Empire itself?*

*Weep not my brethren
There is a timeless river between us and the Empire
With the bridge fallen,
another flamboyant crossover
You linger in the heart of darkness, where everything has fallen apart,
a disgrace to the Empire*

*Postscript (what?)
Protocol is the thing of the Empire
(Step)children of the Empire aspires for this performance,
a carnivalesque of imperial proportions,
which the Empire deploys to the marvel of the post-colonial subject, thus retaining
the position of being the main reference point of thought, and order,
in the Empire and beyond*

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce this important book on youth development and harnessing the demographic dividend in South Africa. As we all know, youth represent the future of any society, and their development and empowerment are critical for the prosperity of the nation. As the world's population continues to grow, so does the importance of investing in the development of young people. In South Africa, where 35.7% of the population is under the age of 35, the potential for harnessing the demographic dividend is enormous. With the right investments and policies, South Africa can turn its youthful population into a driving force for economic and social development.

This book on Youth Development and Harnessing the Demographic Dividend in South Africa is a timely and important contribution to the conversation around how best to support young people in realizing their full potential – As it has been well documented that young people do not want a handout, but want a hand up! The contributors of this book have brought together a wealth of knowledge and expertise from a range of disciplines to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges facing South Africa's youth and the opportunities that exist for their empowerment. Through a combination of rigorous research and case studies, the contributors demonstrate how investing in young people can lead to positive outcomes across a range of areas, including education, health, employment, and civic engagement.

They also highlight the key role that policy-makers, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders can play in creating an enabling environment for youth development. The book can be read in six parts: Part One uses a detailed statistical analysis to provide the demographic dynamics of South Africa's youth and the implications for harnessing the demographic dividend for economic growth and development in South Africa. Part Two details key challenges faced by youth both in South Africa and globally by looking at pandemics that have befallen society in the last three decades. Part Three of the book focusses on youth transitions and possibilities for the future. These include youth aspirations, youth career decision-making, and youth transitions to work. Part Four deals with development and growth. It first looks at available international instruments for development and growth and their implications for youth. Part Five provides an outline of youth employment difficulties and opportunities in South Africa. In Part Six of the book, the focus is on youth participation, inclusivity, social protection. This is done by looking at Treseder's Youth Participation Model, and South Africa's students smite for policy Inclusivity.

The book also provides practical recommendations for how to design and implement effective youth-focused programs and policies, and offers insights into the factors that contribute to their success. I commend the authors for their commitment to advancing the empowerment of young people in South Africa, and for their efforts to bring attention to the critical importance of harnessing the demographic dividend. I have no doubt that this book will be an important resource for anyone interested in supporting the development of young people and building a brighter future for the country. The book is a product of the collective efforts of various experts and stakeholders in the youth development space in South Africa, and their contributions reflect a deep understanding of the issues facing young people and the solutions needed to address them. I am confident that this work will be a valuable resource for policy-makers, practitioners, researchers, and anyone interested in advancing the well-being and empowerment of young people in the country. This is a brilliantly written and edited book that should be read by every young person who wants to understand where we are and where we are going as a country.

It will be the blueprint for all studies into the problems and interventions government and social partners ought to take to ensure that #WeTheYouth participate in creating the country we want to live in now and will eventually inherit. I urge all readers to engage with the ideas and insights presented in this book and to use them as a basis for action that can help unlock the potential of the youth population in South Africa and promote the country's sustainable development. In conclusion, harnessing the demographic dividend in South Africa requires a holistic approach to youth development. This includes investing in education, skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship, as well as promoting social inclusion and addressing underlying challenges such as poverty and inequality. By investing in young people, South Africa can create a more prosperous and inclusive society that benefits all its citizens, while also redressing past imbalances.

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Introduction

Botshabelo Maja and Busani Ngcaweni

Over the last 10 years, the world has experienced a plethora of major shifts in society, many of which have been unprecedented. Technologically, with major economic implications, the advent of the fourth industrial revolution has seen emergence of artificial intelligence. This has meant that many things that humans used to do can now be easily and more efficiently done by machines. The world population has also over the last three years experienced a major health pandemic, COVID-19, which is something never seen for centuries. This pandemic has resulted in many deaths and disease, most of which impacted middle-aged and older members of society. ‘Global life expectancy at birth fell to 71.0 years in 2021, down from 72.8 in 2019, due mostly to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic’ (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2022). The effects of global warming have begun to be directly felt in many parts of the world, with various weather related disasters impacting on societies negatively. The advent of wars during this same period has not helped abate the difficulties mankind has faced.

According to the United Nation’s World Population Prospects 2022, there are now 8 billion human beings on earth, with India projected to be the most populous country in 2023. The African continent is projected by the United Nations to become the biggest game changer in terms of population growth over the next 30 years – leading up to the year 2050.

More than half of the projected increase in global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in just eight countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania. Disparate growth rates among the world’s largest countries will re-order their ranking by size. (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2022)

In all of this, one silver lining however remains – young people. Currently, of the 8 billion people on earth, 1.2 billion of them are young people aged 15–24 years. This represents 16% of the global population. On the African continent however,

young people represent 40% of the African population. Africa however remains the most impoverished continent on earth. According to United Nations' data,

countries with high levels of fertility tend to be those with relatively low incomes per capita, over time the growth of the world's population has become increasingly concentrated among the world's poorest countries, most of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. (UN Future of the World, No. 140)

In South Africa, according to figures released by the Department of Social Development in February 2023, 716,200 young graduates had applied for the government social relief of distress grant of R350 by the end of January 2023. This happens in a context where, according to figures released by Statistics South Africa in their quarter 3 report of 2022, youth unemployment is at 59.6% for the age group 15–24, and 45.5% for the age group 25–34 (Statistics South Africa (SSA), 2022).

This is however an opportune moment for the African continent. The youth

shift in the age distribution provides a time-bound opportunity for accelerated economic growth per capita, known as the 'demographic dividend'. To maximize the potential benefits of a favourable age distribution, countries should invest in the further development of their human capital by ensuring access to health care and quality education at all ages and by promoting opportunities for productive employment and decent work. (UN Future of the World, No. 140)

Young people in South Africa are themselves optimistic about the future. According to a survey of young people released by the South African College of Applied Psychology in 2023, young people hold aspirations to do meaningful and fulfilling work, and aim to make a positive difference in the world (South African College of Applied Psychology, 2023). It is this opportune moment, presented by the demographic dividend, which this book explores in detail. The argument contained in this book is weaved into five parts – which are separate but related – all in pursuit of the youth demographic dividend.

In Part One, we explore the very concept of youth and how it shapes the notion of the demographic dividend. We do so by looking at the demographic dynamics of South Africa's youth and the implications for harnessing the demographic dividend. We argue that demographic literature has long viewed youth as a transitory period from childhood to adulthood, without exploring how to harness their demographic dividend. This body of literature covers factors that influence youth preparedness to positively contribute to the economic growth of the country, which include educational attainment, access to health care, access to family planning services, timing of childbearing and access to relevant social services. These factors are similar to those that determine the country's ability to harness the demographic dividend, after demographic conditions of the dividend have

been met. Two aspects of the demographic dividend are assessed in this chapter. Firstly, the chapter explores the age structure of South Africa's population to ascertain the timing of the age-structure (youth bulge) that is a pre-requisite for the dividend. Secondly, youth demographic characteristics that are known to affect the achievement of the dividend are examined.

Ascertaining the timing of the age structure, what we refer to as the youth bulge which serves as a pre-requisite for the demographic dividend, is not simple and straight forward. There are a number of demographic factors that may impact the realisation of the youth bulge in one way or another. These factors may include pandemics and epidemics. We deal with these in Part Two of the book. We focus on the HIV and AIDS pandemic in South Africa, and the impact it has had on young people. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in the years 2019 to 2023 has not impacted on young people in South Africa as has been the case with HIV and AIDS. Complex inequalities have shaped the trajectory of the HIV epidemic in South Africa. These include factors related to gender disempowerment, poverty, family disruption and violence – all of which have intensified the risk of HIV infection among the majority of South Africans, contributing to one of the most severe country-level HIV epidemics globally. Neo-liberal economic policies adopted in the post-apartheid period failed to address poverty and burgeoning urban migration – both of which were key factors exacerbating vulnerability to HIV. While there was, ostensibly, a strong commitment to addressing the HIV epidemic by the post-apartheid government, HIV prevalence among pregnant women quadrupled from 7.6% in 1994 to 30.2% in 2005 (Kharsany et al., 2015). Contributing to this rise, was a series of missteps by the national Department of Health in the late 1990s, which constrained HIV prevention efforts and stifled HIV treatment. The mid-2000s saw a reprioritisation of response to the epidemic, with international guidelines supported by biomedical and social research underpinning a rights- and evidence-based response. Multisectoral HIV prevention activities were complemented by high levels of investment in implementing prevention of mother to child HIV transmission and expanding access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) for HIV in the public sector. While these efforts contributed to stabilising the epidemic, stark inequalities in vulnerability and susceptibility to HIV infection continued – in particular, among youth. In part two, we draw on a review of the research literature to describe concerns and explore opportunities for a response.

Part Two also looks at social media and how it has shaped and informed young people in a manner that impacts on the demographic dividend. We argue that while a decade ago the AIDS pandemic was driven by determinants such as poverty, deprivation, migrancy, patriarchy and gender-based violence – today the socio-structural drivers of HIV infections include social and electronic media and reality television. These new dimensions saw further expression with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 onwards. As a consequence, to consign both HIV and the COVID-19 pandemics to history's museum of pandemics, strategists must employ greater infiltration and mastery of social and electronic media and reality TV. In the case of HIV, these created social clouds or

bubbles where unprotected sex, transactional sex and multiple concurrent sexual partnerships are manufactured and proliferated. The same was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic, in which case these social clouds or bubbles created an alternative narrative about the source of the pandemic, who and how people get infected, and both the requisite remedies and preventions in this regard. With reality television gaining popularity on low-cost paid channels and free-to-air television; with smartphone penetration widening and costs of access to data falling, a social cloud has been created, enabling the cultural majority (those who control the media and capital) to set trends for everyone, including those with less means. These trends in turn become a standard many aspire to live by. The ontological density of the poor and lower middle-class women is lost through the universalisation of social and cultural trends set by middle elites who control the production and reproduction of knowledge and shape international and national imagination. It is these discourses, and their shaping of imagination as a consequence, that this chapter deals with. It looks at both the implications and consequences which, in the case of pandemics such as these, can be constraining in our endeavour to harness the demographic dividend.

Having understood who we are talking about in Part One, which is youth and the demographic dividend, and being alive to the complexity presented by pandemics and epidemics in Part Two, we start to project options and possibilities from Part Three onwards. These options and possibilities begin with youth transitions.

We explore the notion of building young peoples' capacity to aspire from two angles. The first angle we look at focusses on the last two years of young people's schooling, and how they go about building their own maps of the future. It presents case studies of five high school kids and how they utilise artefacts to narrate their own future building process. Young people are born with certain inborn traits that define who they are. These traits are harnessed over time on their journey towards adulthood, shaping their aspirations in the process, and resulting in the adults of tomorrow. The journey towards adulthood is however not equal. It is filled with different kinds of maps and navigational tools. Some of these maps and navigational tools enhance young people's inborn traits, resulting in better selves of tomorrow. Others inhibit and at times block young people's inborn traits, resulting in despair and failure. This chapter utilises an inborn trait of art to track and trace five black youth from both middle- and working-class backgrounds, in order to unpack the role their maps and navigational tools either inhibit and/or enhance their capacity to aspire. Artistic pieces produced by each of these young people are utilised as the thread to tell a story about how young people's capacity to aspire can either be enhanced and/or inhibited, premised on an OATS theory. The OATS theory suggests that core to young people's maps and navigational tools that seek to build the capacity to aspire, is the need to focus on objects, agency, tools, and spaces.

Transition is however also about young people's career decision-making, and the factors that influence the choices they make. In this second chapter about transitions we look at technical and vocational education and training (TVET),

which has been identified as a potential solution to the triple challenge of inequality, poverty and unemployment in South Africa. We argue that research has paid little to no attention to what influences TVET college students' career decision-making. This chapter looks at what influences the career decision-making of TVET college students in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, Eastern Cape, South Africa. The chapter, located within the subjectivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, aims to contribute to understanding what influences the career decision-making of TVET college students in a developing context of South Africa. Drawing on qualitative (individual and group) interviews with students, it examines the career decisions of a small sample of students enrolled at one South African public TVET colleges in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro. In so doing, the study brings four elements to the study of career decision-making. Firstly, empirically, it brings a fresh and subjective perspective of what 'TVET' and 'career' means to TVET students. Secondly, it brings to the literature on TVET, an analysis of the Careership Theory that draws from the TVET college students' experiences. Thirdly, it brings to our understanding of career decision-making, the role of structure and agency from a Bourdieusian perspective. Fourthly, it transcends the heavily critiqued Bourdieusian model to encompass the notion of capacity to aspire, borrowed from Arjun Appadurai, to better explain the role of culture in social action.

The last chapter on youth transitions uses a case study from the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator to plot an example of how young people in South Africa transition into the world of work and what it takes for them to succeed. South Africa's youth bulge provides both a potential asset and challenge for economic growth. The potential demographic dividend that this youth bulge represents can only manifest if youth are economically active. With youth unemployment at 51% and 7.6-million youth not in employment, education, or training – large numbers of youth are at-risk for long-term social and economic exclusion. This will only perpetuate structural inequality and poverty. In the context of extended lacklustre economic growth, the capacity of the formal economy to create large-scale employment is limited without active interventions to facilitate successful transition and entry into the labour market. This chapter explores the nature of youth transitions in South Africa. It examines the range of 'failures' that hamper successful transitions and presents a framework for conceptualising the role of labour market interventions in overcoming these. It then locates the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator (Harambee) within the ecosystem of labour market interventions, describing its approach, evolution and the lessons that have emerged for how to support successful youth transitions.

We continue to explore options for realising the demographic dividend in Part Four of the book by focussing on youth development and growth. The role of education is central to young people's development and growth. On the African continent, there is no dearth of international instruments or domestic legislation that guarantees the right to education. Yet, realising the right to education remains an intractable challenge. The challenge mainly revolves around access and quality of education, particularly for young people in public schools on the

continent. As a result, private education, which is mainly reserved for the affluent, bridges the gap in addressing the quality of education. In this chapter, the school exchange for private school owners' project of the Independent Pan African Youth Parliament (IPAYP) in partnership with UNESCO Centre for Global Education (UNESCOCFORGE) is discussed. These organisations combined interests to create solutions that are organic, empowering and promote knowledge sharing. In the first place, the chapter examines education in Africa, its recognition and promotion as a right. Secondly, it examines the current model of education and its influence on engendering human capabilities. Finally, the chapter discusses the value-added by the programmatic model of IPAYP and UNESCOCFORGE as a tool in the analysis of the right to education embedded in the right to development (RTD) in Africa.

We also explore other South African youth development programmes in this section over and above IPAYP. These can be characterised as social crime prevention or building youth resilience. However, many of these programmes can be seen as one dimensional, focussing largely on skills development and preparing youth for the labour market. In addition, a large number of these programmes are short-term interventions, with the long-term impact not always measured. A number of scholars over the last two decades have emphasised the importance of sustainability and envisioning a continuum of development, particularly for youth who have become disengaged from social institutions. Consequently, there is an urgent need to examine the different approaches to youth development and their value, and more importantly, to provide a platform for youth voices to be heard on their perceptions of what they need to enhance their growth and development, particularly in the context of the growing number of youth who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). An approach that is gaining currency in South Africa with NEET youth is that of a holistic approach. This chapter explores a holistic approach to personal transformation in the youth sector as implemented by the Chrysalis Academy (CA) over the past 18 years. Its approach embraces the development of the whole person and encourages education in its broadest sense, including the arts, technical and vocational training, emotional intelligence, psychosocial support and spiritual development.

In Part Five of this book, we provide an outline of youth employment opportunities in South Africa. We do so by mapping out, and providing a rapid assessment of the successes and shortcomings of key national interventions on youth employment in South Africa. We focus on programmes intended for young people aged 15–34 years of age, considering the specific needs of 15–24-year olds as compared 25–34 year olds and the particular needs of young women, youth with different educational qualifications, youth from the rural areas, youth with disabilities as well as youth from varied socio-economic backgrounds and social issues. The conceptual framework underpinning this chapter informs the way in which the data has been categorised and analysed. The framework is underpinned by a core assumption: that, while unemployment is a national challenge in South Africa, there are particular challenges that specifically affect youth. This requires a youth employment strategy that addresses the needs of different cohorts

of young people, and which specifically addresses the myriad of ways in which young people transition into the labour market. The chapter further proposes that we need to understand that enabling successful Labour Market Transitions necessitates a strategy that can overcome 'failures' with respect to both supply and demand as well as 'failures' of alignment between supply and demand.