



Teaching Project Management to Youth in South Africa

Students Learn Through Practical Example

Editor's Note: Reggie Brown, PMP, made a presentation about this project to the PMI Educational Foundation, which passed along this information to *PMI Today*.

Project management professionals in South Africa are helping to improve educational opportunities while simultaneously providing high school students with first-hand exposure to critical project management skills. The unique interaction is occurring at the LEAP Science and Maths School in Cape Town.

The LEAP School was founded by John Gilmour to address the problem of the low number of high school students from areas west of Cape Town who were matriculating and entering the University of Cape Town with science and math exemptions. The school provides students from these townships full immersion, or double normal classroom time. The LEAP school expects to produce 40 students with science and math exemptions in 2006.

To learn about potential careers, students at the



Before and after: Students prepare the work tables at the refurbished container that now serves as their study space.

school shadowed project management practitioners at UkuZwana consultancy. Following that experience, Reggie Brown and a colleague volunteered to teach the fundamentals of project management at the school.

While this was occurring, principal Gilmour noted the difficulties students faced in studying and completing homework assignments because of poor conditions, a distracting environment and overcrowded living space. The Kuyasa retirement community offered space in a container, located on a quiet corner, on the condition that the school convert the space.

Thus, a practical project for the students was born. The creation of the LEAP School Langa Study Facility was used as a model for students to learn about project management.

The project fully utilized the nine Knowledge Areas of *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)*.

The team understood their resource limitations, and helped teach the value of project planning relative to

project phasing. Project scope was adjusted to work within the resources available.

The project also included completion of a charter and other documentation; identification of sponsors, project manager and key stakeholders; securing buy-in from teachers and students; and securing the right resources to complete the project. The project even had a slogan: "Say what you are going to do and do what you say."

The 12-student project team met weekly over three months to plan the project. The project was completed over the Christmas holiday, with most of the work being carried out by the students themselves.

Students at the school are now enjoying their new facility with its desks, chairs, lighting and a paraffin heater. The team is justifiably proud of its accomplishments. This sense of dignity is evident in the way that they are taking ownership of the new facility and caring for it.

Another byproduct of the project was an improvement in communications between the older and younger generations, since the container was provided by the retirement community.

Other projects are now being planned. For example, a second container, which will be used for a computer lab, is being donated to the site and the students are eager to move into this next phase.

Say what you are going to do and do what you say

Project Management – A key Enabler for Community Capacity Building

Du Noon is an informal settlement located east of Table View and north of Killarney Gardens, a few kilometers away from the Chevron Refinery. Unemployment is high and it is estimated that 1 in 2 households are infected and or impacted by HIV/AIDS.

Chevron Refinery PG&PA is busy with a project that supports the premise that project management skills are critical to developing community capacity. Chevron and PM4Africa are working together to provide a model for sustainable development for the people of Du Noon.

Capacity building refers to support which is given to organizations, communities, or even countries which have a need to acquire certain skills or competencies or to upgrade their ability to perform their mission. Most capacity is built within the societies themselves through the medium of private, public, or NGO intervention.

Capacity Building is, however, not limited to international aid work. More recently, capacity building is being used by government and the private sector to transform community and industry approaches to social and environmental problems

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defined 'capacity building' as *the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks, institutional development, including community participation (of women in particular), human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems, adding that, UNDP recognizes that capacity building is a long-term, continuing process, in which all stakeholders participate (ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and water user groups, professional associations, academics and others).*

Capacity Building is much more than training and includes the following:

- Human resource development, the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively.
- Organizational development, the elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, not only within organizations but also the management of relationships between the different organizations and sectors (public, private and community).
- Institutional and legal framework development, making legal and regulatory changes to enable organizations, institutions and agencies at all levels and in all sectors to enhance their capacities ([citation: Urban Capacity Building Network](#)).

There is an urgent need to provide a balance between the practical application of project management and the identification, evaluation, and management of specific capacity building objectives. The strategy is to focus a bit more on the capacity building activities with the understanding that project management skill is the key enabler.

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A project consists of a group of activities with a clearly defined beginning and an end. Furthermore a project must produce a pre-defined outcome.

Heavenly Promise, an NGO supported in part through the generosity of Chevron Refinery PG&PA, have established a soup kitchen that delivers soup to home bound AIDS patients. Home-based carers (HBC) are tasked with the duty of delivering the soup and providing some basic care.

Caregivers are unemployed volunteers who receive a small stipend of R500 per month. Many are also impacted by HIV/AIDS. Volunteer work aggravates their poverty as many share food and material goods with the patients they visit. They are also tasked with doing domestic chores and arranging for funerals too.

Caregivers need psychosocial support as their work is extremely stressful. They also need additional training similar to the training that nurses receive in order to be able to administer basic medication.

There is a high turnover of home-based carers. This results in an increase in recruiting and retraining. People will not work for free indefinitely.

Volunteerism is not sustainable. One desired outcome of this project is to implement a support infrastructure that includes a team of healthcare professionals. Another is to assist all home-based carers to ultimately obtain formal employment. Our plan is to partner with leading healthcare organizations and the Department of Social Development to leverage available resources.

The discipline of project management is essential. It is being utilized to create and monitor a master plan for this project, formalizing processes and procedures for home-based carers, and assisting with the organizational redesign of Heavenly Promise. It is believed that the mentoring process will also facilitate the transfer of essential project management skills to provide sustainability.

Sustainable development does not have to be an oxymoron!

PM4Africa is an initiative sponsored through IMVUSA Project Management Solutions. The mission is to significantly increase the awareness of the importance of project management as a life skill by means of transferring skill to project participants of community based projects in previously disadvantaged areas. This will ensure that individuals and communities are more likely to take control of their own futures rather than depending on government to sustain them.