



# South African Politics and the Impact on the Young Generation

The recent violent protests by students at campuses across the country earlier this year is said to have cost R460 million in damaged property. But it is too simple to just measure the cost of destroyed property as the true cost of the protests. Young South Africans have been waiting for 23 years to see the fruits of the “rainbow nation”

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They have been patiently waiting for the government to introduce and implement policies that cater for all, change the education system and arm students with the skills that can empower them to start their own businesses. That patience has now started to wane.

So many activities have taken place over the past few years, directly affecting the youth of today. We have even learned to coin the phrase ‘Born Frees’ meaning those who were born post our freedom of 1994. Today the so-called born-frees are 22 years of age, and of full age to cast their votes in the forth-coming municipal elections. Besides, those four years younger than them will be for the first time registering their maiden vote come August.

The youth doesn’t see things the same as those older than 35 years. Many of today’s leaders in both business and politics don’t fully comprehend the needs and the psyche of this new generation. The recent #FeesMustFall campaign that quickly spread all over the country like a wild fire is testimony to the fact that we either do not understand the youth or we just do not want to listen to the youth. The #Feesmustfall protest was the biggest after the 1976 Soweto Uprising where students literally forced the government to listen.

Recently released data shows that South Africa's unemployment rate jumped by 2.2 percentage points, up from 24.5% in the fourth quarter of 2015 to 26.7% in the first quarter of 2016. What that means is that hundreds of thousands of graduates are sitting at home with their qualifications. Finding employment prospects is one of the most difficult challenges young South Africans endure on a daily basis.

At the birth of democracy, all South Africans had hope of a brighter future and great opportunities, especially the youth who were still at high school as all universities immediately opened up to them. All former model C schools were immediately opened up for all races, something which was a first for South Africa. Now fast-forward 22 years later, many of those lucky enough to be employed do not earn enough to keep up with the cost of living. Our growth rates have also slowed dramatically and we are

Prior to the global financial crisis many of the youth still had hope, whereas after 2008, some of the policies that our government implemented have only served to butcher the economy and scare away foreign direct investors. Studies show that South Africa has lost over R700 billion in corruptions since 1994 with an estimated R30 billion per year, an amount that if invested into economy would have been used to address key challenges such as job creation, education system and boost government revenue. We are failing to create employment for the young generation, while their parents often need to remain in their jobs as long as they can to delay a retirement they could not adequately provide for.

We are often told we are still a young country but that doesn't excuse our failings. It took the United Arab Emirates less than 30 years to turn Dubai from a desert into mega city by ensuring it had in place the right economic policies which favoured trade, retail, logistics and aviation activities, and of course attract direct foreign investors. Will we be able to celebrate similar success come 2024?

The prospect thereof is unfortunately growing dimmer by the day, unless government becomes more focused on achieving growth and job creation. For some time, it has not been able to credibly lay claim to be doing that and the investor community has noticed. Over the last two months of 2015, foreign investors pulled almost R16bn out of the country. This is on top of the R500bn of SA Inc value destroyed when President Zuma sacked then Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene in a move that triggered numerous damning allegations of state capture.

facing the prospects of a technical recession in 2016. There is despair written all over the faces of the youth in the townships. They are faced with the hardships one can never have imagined at the dawn of this democracy.

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The youth has noticed and is certainly not as bound to keep on supporting the ruling party despite its failings as many of their elders have been. With all these allegations and mudslinging in the papers, television and our parliament, our youth is bound to see through those who believe the electorate is naïve.

South Africa needs strong and credible leaders who will stand together to fight against the ever growing scourge of corruption so the country can gain trust and attract more foreign investors.

We need to urgently tackle the country's structural economic inequality. Rich South Africans continue to flourish while the poor continue to suffer. It is imperative that the government starts delivering, especially for the “born frees”. The protests we have seen, especially among students, is because people are tired of waiting for the government to deliver and they are fighting and demanding change!

One of the things government can do is to revisit the technicons concept.

University dropout rates are soaring but our government continues to foist this system down the throats of the youth telling them that they all need to get a degree to be a success in life. This system has only succeeded in creating a massive pool of disgruntled young South African who feels the government is not doing enough for them. Our government must revisit the technikon concepts that enhance graduates with skills development to start their own businesses, earn a living and combat poverty.



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