



in this issue

1

Dr. Tom Bisschoff on failing schools in South Africa: A Case of defeatism in school leadership

2

Issifu Issah on Ghana joins the global broadband IT community

3

PGlobal Project Spotlight: High Speed Train Set Feasibility Study

4

PGlobal Project Spotlight: Labor Force Analysis of Turkish Republic Northern Cyprus

Failing Schools in South Africa: A Case of Defeatism in School Leadership

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All over the world school systems are worried about failing schools in their system. South Africa is no exception. Different policies and concomitant legislation are being developed to rectify this and to obtain some form of uniformity and consistency throughout the system.

In a recently funded research project by the National Research Foundation in South Africa (NRF), Dr. Tom Bisschoff from the University of Birmingham and a team of researchers from South Africa, completed a study on failing schools in South Africa. After interviewing seven principals of failing schools by asking them why they felt their schools are failing the normal school and structural reasons emerged from the transcripts namely, a lack of resources, disengaged pupils, uncommitted teachers and lack of parental involvement. However a further in-depth analysis of the data that went beyond the obvious revealed a new surprising theme namely a lack of resilience. This extreme lack of resilience that was found amongst the seven principals was labelled defeatism. The principals just did not see a way forward. The data indicate a decline in job satisfaction and detachment in an unsupportive environment. The few green shoots of optimism that

were mentioned were quickly degraded by the stake holders or viewed with apathy. Everybody wanted the job security and the pay but lacked any attempt to make additional efforts and to get out of their own comfort zones.

If it is true what Leithwood et al. say about the importance of leadership in school improvement one cannot ignore this finding. Resilience seems to be a necessary condition for effective leadership. The concept is a concept developed by developmental psychologists (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003) but also applies to school leadership. It is all about confronting stressful experiences and coping with them effectively (Holahan, Moos & Schaefer, 1996) and the capability of leaders to cope successfully in the face of significant change, adversity or risk (Green & Conrad, 2002). Richardson adds to this the growth and adaptation through disruption rather than just recovering and bouncing back (2002); it is all about the ability in a leader to turn challenges into opportunities.

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This research underlines the notion that there are limits to school reform from the top by way of legislation. For a school system to reform all leaders' right down to the chalk-face level should be committed and willing to embrace the reform. Empowerment programmes should be in place from the onset to support especially principals who should facilitate the implement of the reform with vigour and enthusiasm.

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Ghana Joins the Global Mobile Broadband IT Community

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Since mid-1990, when Ghana experienced the introduction of mobile broadband services, much progress has been made in advances the growth of use of mobile communication.

In a recent ITU (International Telecommunication Union) report on "Measuring the Information Society", said, Ghana is among the most dynamic countries in the IDI 2011, registering 23 percent increase in its ICT Development Index from 1.81 in 2010 to 2.23 in 2011.

The ITU report, "underlying the in the use sub-index, is the increase in the number of Internet users and, even more significantly, the leap in mobile-broadband penetration. Some 14 percent of Ghanaians are now Internet users, up from 10 percent in 2010. Mobile broadband penetration more than tripled, and stands at 23 percent in 2011".

Further in that report, Ghana's progress "is an impressive jump which puts Ghana in first place in Africa in terms of mobile-broadband penetration. Ghana's mobile market is very competitive and five operators are providing 3G services". Because of the stiff competition in the mobile telephony sector, the operators are offering different attractive promotional incentives to increase their client base and use of their services.

The Ghana agriculture sector is, also currently benefitting from the advance in broadband technology. The IFDC (International Fertilizer Development Centre) MIR-Plus 2009-2013 initiative, has linked over 2 million farmers to agro-dealers, who

will help train and supply farmers. In October 2012 in Tamale, Northern Ghana, IFDC launched the mFarms ICT platform, linking over 2 million farmers across ECOWAS (Economic Commission of West Africa States). According IFDC, "the mFarms system, is a web and cell phone-based platform (www.mfarms.org), that provides affordable tools to build linkages and improve communications and operational efficiencies among actors along the agricultural value chain. It allows organizations, associations and identifiable groups, to serve a large number of their geographically dispersed members or affiliates".

The remarkable advances in the mobile broadband technologies in Ghana, certainly, present the international business community, opportunity to see Ghana as the emerging market place to invest in and, to realize even higher returns on investment in 2014 and beyond.

Project Spotlight: High Speed Train Set Feasibility Study



PGlobal has completed the feasibility study of High Speed Train (HST) sets for a local railroad authority. Within the scope of the project, economic feasibility, financial feasibility and a procurement plan was developed for the client.

The economic feasibility study was based on time value of money, traffic accidents avoided with the use of HST and the positive impact of usage of HST on the environment. The monetary value of time was calculated for the local citizens and based on the time saved with the use of HST compared to other modes of transportation.

Once the time saved is measured then it is transformed into monetary value by employing appropriate conversion factor. By the same token based on the data for deaths and injuries caused by traffic accidents in the region was taken into account and it was projected how much less traffic accidents would occur with the use of HST and accidents is also converted into monetary value. Since HST pollute the environment less compared to road vehicles, this positive aspect of HST was also incorporated to the study. Based on the variables mentioned above an economic internal rate of return and economic net present value was calculated.

The financial feasibility study was built on operating revenues and expenses. The operating revenues included ones from tickets and the sales of snacks and beverages on board. On the other hand, the cost side encompasses the running cost, personnel cost and other related running expenses. Embedding costs and revenues into a model, a financial net present value and a financial internal rate of return was calculated.

The last part of the report is the assessment of a procurement plan of new HST sets. The numbers of new sets were calculated based on the projected demand of passengers on six different routes and the number of train runs planned on each route. Drawing on this data a yearly procurement plan for next ten years was developed. While preparing the comprehensive procurement plan, a comparative study was also conducted to examine in general how other countries in the world match their passenger demands with how many train sets as this part evaluate the lessons learned.

Other Projects Recently Completed by PGlobal

- Wholesale Broadband Access Market Regulation Project
- An Assessment of Product Bundling
- Development of A Strategic Plan for A Local Ministry for the Period 2013-2017
- Privatization of Motorways and Bridges: Technical Consultancy Services

About PGlobal

PGlobal is one of Turkey's leading international advisory houses and has completed financial, economic, and management consultancy assignments in Turkey, Turkmenistan, France, Saudi Arabia, N. Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malaysia, and Azerbaijan. PGlobal's team has a combined international experience of over 100 years. PGlobal's experience in event concept design and management includes national and international summits, meetings and training sessions.

Project Spotlight: Labor Force Analysis of Turkish Republic Northern Cyprus



PGlobal recently undertook the project to do the labor force analysis of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The aim of the project was to bring up some recommendations to improve TRNC's labor skill sets. To accomplish the task the project was done in three phases: Current Situation Analysis, Policy Analysis and strategy recommendations respectively.

The current situation analysis was done in three phases: In the first phase the employment trends were analyzed. In this phase every sector was analyzed and the sectors that were denser in employment were identified. In the following phase several surveys were conducted with people who were part of the labor force of TRNC. The aim of these surveys was to understand in which sectors the inhabitants of TRNC were willing to work and why. The last phase of current situation analysis was to identify the sectors which were weak in terms of labor force because the labor supply was not sufficient. Also the mismatch in labor demand and supply was also analyzed. At the end of this section; a report was produced which identified the weaknesses and strengths of TRNC's labor force and also showed that which sectors needed more labor force and those which had a larger labor supply compared to demand.



After the completion of the current situation report, a policy analysis was done. The rationale behind this policy paper was to understand what the law structure of TRNC was since it is very important to understand how regulation affects labor supply and demand.

The last study within the scope of this project was a strategy and implementation plan. Based on the results from the current situation analysis, a set of actions was proposed on how to match the labor demand with labor supply. Some sectors lacked the education availability so therefore establishment of some new courses and school was recommended. The recommendations were made within the legal framework which identified in the policy assessment report. In order to make things easier for the labor market some policy changes were also recommended which were becoming a hurdle for the matching of supply and demand of labor force.

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