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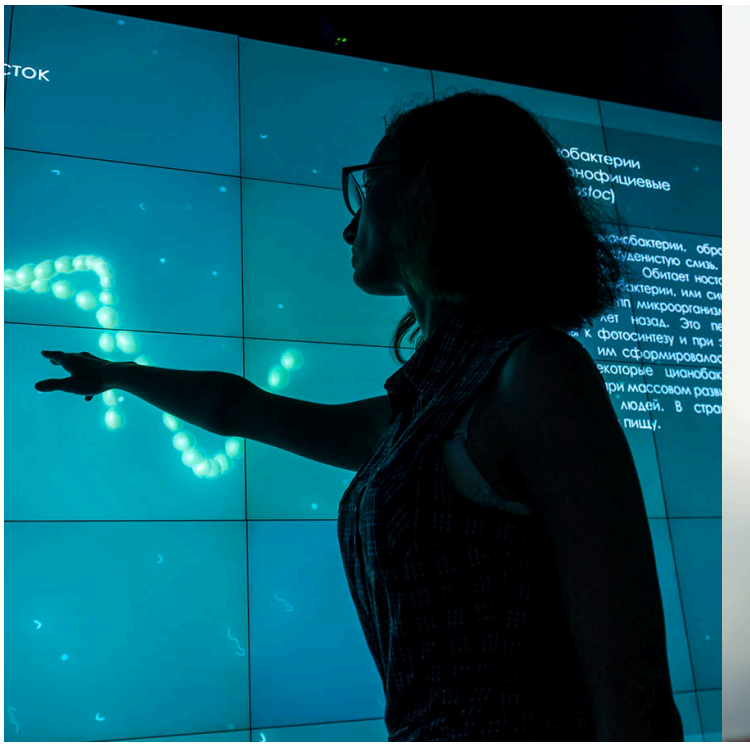
Navigating the future: AI-driven job market insights for South Africa



The digital revolution is reshaping industries and economies across the globe—and South Africa is no exception.

As artificial intelligence (AI) emerges as a pivotal force, understanding its impact on the local job market and various sectors becomes crucial. Industries using AI around the world are seeing over three times more revenue per worker and a 56% wage boost for those with AI skills.

What could this mean for South Africa? As South Africa navigates the dynamic landscape fostered by AI, several critical industries are undergoing transformative shifts. The PwC 2025 Global AI Job Barometer highlights emerging trends and statistics, providing a roadmap for understanding the nation's journey towards AI adoption. Here are notable insights and projected impacts across various sectors:

Sector impact analysis

Education sector

The education sector has witnessed the largest increase in job postings requiring AI skills, surging from 4.9% in 2021 to 8.5% in 2024. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector follows closely, where AI skill demand rose from 5.5% to 7.9% over the same period, showcasing the expanding importance of AI proficiency.

Agricultural sector

South Africa's agricultural sector is gradually embracing AI technologies to boost productivity and sustainability. AI-driven smart farming techniques optimise crop health monitoring, planting schedules and resource management. As per the PwC 2025 Global AI Job Barometer, job postings demanding AI skills increased from 2.91% in 2021 to 3.68% in 2024.

Financial and insurance industry:
Globally, the Financial Services industry remains a prime employer of AI-skilled workers, creating diverse opportunities for tech-savvy professionals. Although AI skills are required for 5.1% of all Financial Services jobs in 2024, South Africa's adoption has been sluggish. Factors such as investment levels in AI technologies, skill gaps, the regulatory environment and differing priorities may delay this transition. Strategic investments and policy support could catalyse a transformational shift in South Africa's financial sector.

Manufacturing sector
Globally, the manufacturing sector anticipates a 20% rise in AI-related job opportunities, although South Africa's impact remains subdued. Nonetheless, integrating AI into production processes provides roles focused on innovation and implementation of AI technologies. This is also the very sector that also promises to aid in curbing the unemployment rate in our country.

AI and the South African job market

Despite a weakening job market characterised by fewer roles overall, demand for AI-related skills is steadily increasing. Occupations which are most exposed to AI have seen a 1.32x greater change in demanded skills, while roles less affected by AI have remained more stable in their skills requirements. This trend underscores the growing usage of AI in the market but also the growing significance of AI skills in the local labor market and showcases AI's potential to create more jobs rather than just displacing them. As organisations integrate AI into their operations, roles are being redefined faster than ever before, leading to a dynamic shift in the job market landscape. Companies leveraging AI redefine roles rapidly, enhancing value creation.

"Like electricity, AI has the potential to create more jobs than it displaces if it is used to pioneer new forms of economic activity. Our data suggests companies utilise AI to help individuals create more value rather than simply reduce headcount." - PwC Global AI Job Barometer 2025

Moreover, augmentation-exposed jobs have shown more growth (on average 20% growth rate in job postings across sectors), compared to automation roles across sectors (on average –2% growth rate in postings across sectors). The hotel and recreation sectors, powered by significant tourism growth, have experienced the biggest job expansion in AI augmented roles followed by Financial and Insurance, Construction and Education sectors.

Challenges and opportunities for the workforce

Workforce challenges

- Skill gap: The rapid evolution of AI technology presents a challenge for the workforce, with significant skills gaps arising as educational systems struggle to match demand for specific AI-related competencies. Notably, jobs exposed to augmentation now require higher degrees in 47% of postings, up from 42% in 2019.

To effectively navigate these AI challenges, South African companies should invest in education and training programmes, foster innovation, form strategic partnerships, adopt agile practices, emphasise ethical AI application, leverage governmental support, promote workforce diversity, build robust data infrastructure, implement change management strategies and continuously monitor and evaluate AI initiatives. These strategies can help companies harness AI's potential for economic growth and competitiveness while ensuring workforce development and inclusive progress.

- **Economic pressure:** The high unemployment rate intensifies competition among workers. Individuals lacking AI skills may struggle in a market with increasingly demanding technological expertise. It is further predicted that traditional institutions of higher learning stand the risk of becoming obsolete within a decade, as it is argued that the static curricula simply cannot keep pace with rapid technological and digital changes that many young adults commit to expensive qualifications without a sense of future relevance.

Companies and individuals must embrace continuous learning and adaptability. Companies need to invest in training programmes, nurture innovation, form strategic alliances and adopt strong ethical AI practices to address skill gaps and enhance employability.

Opportunities

- **Democratisation of employment:** AI is offering new paths for individuals who lack formal degrees but have AI-related skills. This trend could democratise employment opportunities and make high-paying jobs accessible to a wider pool of talent.
- **Upskilling and reskilling:** The emphasis on AI skills provides an excellent opportunity for workforce development. Training programmes focusing on AI competencies can equip workers with necessary skills, making them more competitive in the job market.

by
Prof Dayalan Govender,
Christiaan Nel, Bernice Wessels | PwC

INTERNATIONAL HIGHLIGHT

SUCCESSFUL HR AUDIT: MTN ESWATINI FULLY COMPLIES WITH SABPP PPG STANDARDS

Congratulations to MTN eSwatini for their significant achievement. This was not just about receiving the certificatebut about recognising a journey of dedication and commitment to professional excellence. Completing the HRAudit and meeting the requirements demonstrated what it means to uphold professional standards and goodgovernance. To partake in this HR Audit was a leadership act which ensured that people practices are aligned with business strategy and that work place culture is built on fairness , accountability and compliance.

Some wider implications to consider

The shift towards AI-centric roles influences several financial sectors indirectly.

- **Dynamic employment patterns:** As AI transforms job roles, traditional career trajectories may become more fluid, affecting retirement planning, succession strategies and reward systems.
- **Retirement funds:** As AI reshapes job roles, traditional employment patterns may alter retirement planning strategies. Fund managers need to consider the dynamic employment landscape when projecting future contributions and investment returns.
- **Insurance:** With AI streamlining processes in insurance, both long-term and short-term, firms might witness changes in risk profiles.

Conclusion

- South Africa stands at a crossroads. With a booming youth population and the rise of AI, the potential is enormous—but will we seize it?
- The shift to an AI-driven economy promises new opportunities, yet economic and technological hurdles remain. Can we overcome them in time? AI is already reshaping the job market, but without urgent action to close the skills gap, who gets left behind?
- Education must evolve—fast. It's not just about keeping up; it's about preparing to lead. For this transformation to be truly inclusive, industries and policymakers must work hand in hand. The goal? A future where AI boosts business, empowers people and protects vital sectors, securing prosperity for all South Africans.

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Rethinking Human Resources Management Before it is Too Late

Due to multiple interrelated forces, Human Resource Management (HRM) is facing existential and strategic challenges, reshaping its role and value within organizations. Unless it adapts and transforms, its survival is threatened.

HRM has been described as at a crossroads for decades. In the 1990s, the label was applied as it tried to add performance value by shifting from a primarily administrative role to strategic business partner; in the post-2008 financial crisis, the phrase returned as HR tried to balance cost-cutting with talent retention and engagement; in the 2020-2022 global pandemic's "great resignation" and shift to remote work, "at the crossroads" was applied; and it is being repeated now due to the impact of AI, political shifts of DEI, and the hybrid workforce.

But this time it is different. What makes the situation more critical now is that the source of the problem facing HRM is not external; it is internal and concerns how HRM thinks, formulates problems and opportunities, and how decisions are made to address them.

HRM is trapped in a conventional mode of thinking that does not offer effective pathways to solve the kinds of problems organizations are experiencing. These are volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, and hyper-connected (VUCAH), which require a change in HRM worldview and mindsets. Unless HRM applies new methods of problem-solving, the HR function will become extinct. For example, in many organisations, talent acquisition is outsourced, while strategy formulation, change management, leadership development, and organization restructuring are assigned to external consultants.

SHRM Online staff reported that, in a 2013 survey conducted by Lumesse, a talent management firm, across 11 countries, involving 1,293 HRM leader respondents, 61% reported feeling overwhelmed by complexity, while 52% claimed they could not cope with it fully.[1]

The World Health Organization, SHRM, and other organizations are referring to the complex environment in which we now work as the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). The World Economic Forum has suggested we are on the edge of the 5th Industrial Revolution (5IR) in which "we can look forward to a future where smart machines with cognitive intelligence perform tasks that match human ability while delivering machine-level efficiency.[1]

How should HRM think about and address situations in this kind of environment? Cornell University researchers[2] contend that the prevailing approach to thinking about problems is linear, anthropocentric, mechanistic, and ordered (LAMO). Linear means HR challenges are framed using direct cause-and-effect relations. Anthropocentric implies that the HR perspective is human-centered, with the assumption that people are responsible for successes, failures, and productivity. Mechanistic means that the underlying HR models are like machines with parts that can be replaced as needed. Ordered means HR presumes a fundamental organizational hierarchy and reporting structure.

[1] SHRM (2013) Organizational Complexity Overwhelms Many HR Leaders. SHRM Online Staff.
[2] Anil, A. M. (2015). Technology convergence is leading the way for the Fifth Industrial Revolution. World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, Davos, Switzerland, January13. https://www.weforum.org/meetings/world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2025/
[3] Cabrera, D. and Cabrera, L. (2020): Systems Thinking in Seven (7) Images. https://blog.cabreraresearch.org/systems-thinking-in-a-7-images

INTERNAL Highlight

Dr Kgomotso Mopalami SABPP Head of Department | Professional Solutions

We are proud to congratulate Dr. Kgomotso Mopalami on successfully obtaining her PhD. This remarkable achievement is a true reflection of perseverance, hard work, and excellence. We celebrate this milestone with her and look forward to the continued impact of her contributions.

Unfortunately, a LAMO mode of thinking cannot adequately address the wicked and messy problems that emerge in a VUCAH environment. Workplace problems are increasingly non-linear, co-produced, and suddenly emerging from our interactions with technology rather than people. They are better understood using social-network models rather than mechanical or biological models, and these problems are unordered, complex, and sometimes chaotic, with unpredictable outcomes requiring novel, one-time solutions to be generated. Too often, we say, “We have never seen something like this before.”

Another Way to Think and Practice

What is needed within HR is a new – a second – mode of cognition. Indeed, a one-size-fits-all approach is rarely appropriate; therefore, HR must learn to think in an additional way and learn to shift their thinking and practices when the context and problems change.

The Cynefin framework, created by Snowden and Boone,[1] offer a model that may be useful. The framework posits that problem contexts vary from ordered to unordered. Within the ordered context, where straightforward or complicated problems exist, conventional HRM using well-established analytic, evidence-based methods should continue to be applied, and HRM should continue to expect effective outcomes. Within unordered environments, however, are complex and chaotic problems. In such situations, HRM must shift its mindset, mental models, and problem-solving methods to those informed by systems thinking.

The differences between confronting a complicated vs a complex problem should not be understated. This is because, *Until recently, the differences between complicated and complex were not well understood; as a result, they have often been treated in the same way, as if the same process should be used to “deal with” situations (or concepts) that are complicated or complex. Business schools justified this by treating organizations as if they were machines that could be analyzed, dissected, and broken down into parts. According to that myth, if you fix the parts, then reassemble and lubricate, you’ll get the whole system up and running. But this is exactly the wrong way to approach a complex problem.[5]*

“Did you know?”

SAHRUF

This year’s annual SA HR University Forum (SAHRUF) conference will be hosted by the SABPP. The theme of the conference is Future Fit HR Curriculum and Graduate. The conference will bring together academics from various universities to explore the future HRM landscape and trends; how we can locate and integrate the People Practices and Governance Standard within universities’ curriculum; and how can we shape the future HR curriculum and graduate. The winners of the national student excellence awards will be announced at the conference.

04 & 05 August 2025

Our repeated HR challenge to the changed context and need to change thinking and practices can be addressed by exploring how to reframe HRM through the lens of systems and complexity, how to navigate and solve complex HR problems, and what a new learning curriculum would look like.

Two Examples

One example of a needed change is how HR identifies the cause of a problem. In an ordered context with a complicated problem, HRM can benefit from applying root cause analysis, in which the problem is clearly defined, simplified, reduced to its primary causes, and then best practices are used. For a complex problem, however, there are no experts or best practices. A different approach must be applied.

Consider the problem of disengaged employees, which may be defined as complex, and for which the Iceberg Model can be used. At the surface, the organisation experiences issues with employee attendance and reports general dissatisfaction with leadership. Like an iceberg, by probing below the surface, HRM can establish patterns of employee complaints that expand over time. Below this level, structures may be discerned showing repeated groups of behaviors that promote destructive actions attributable to perceptions of poor remuneration. At the deepest level of this problem are mental models that influence and inform the behaviors, such as perceptions of tedious repetitive work. Addressing this kind of problem requires a systems-informed design-thinking problem-solving methodology.

A second example is HRM's overreliance on structural models that were designed for stable contexts with linear relationships. A comparison of how reporting relationships and chains of command among departments and divisions are commonly described versus how they function in the VUCAH and often turbulent context reveals a shift from linear to non-linear. Operational and functional realities require people to utilize multiple network relationships to make decisions and solve problems.

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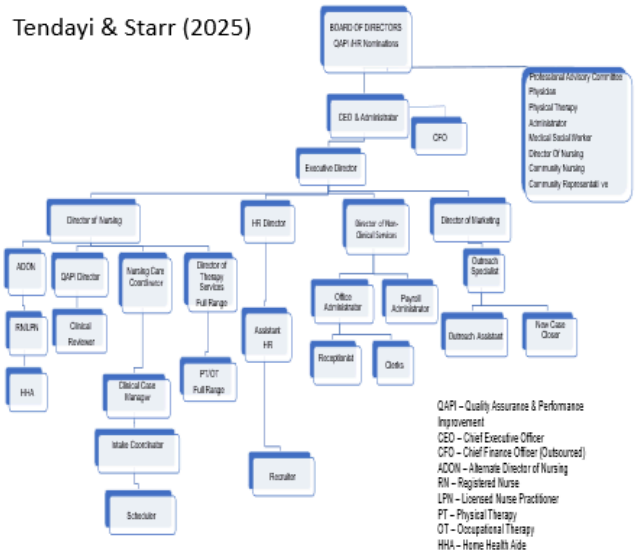
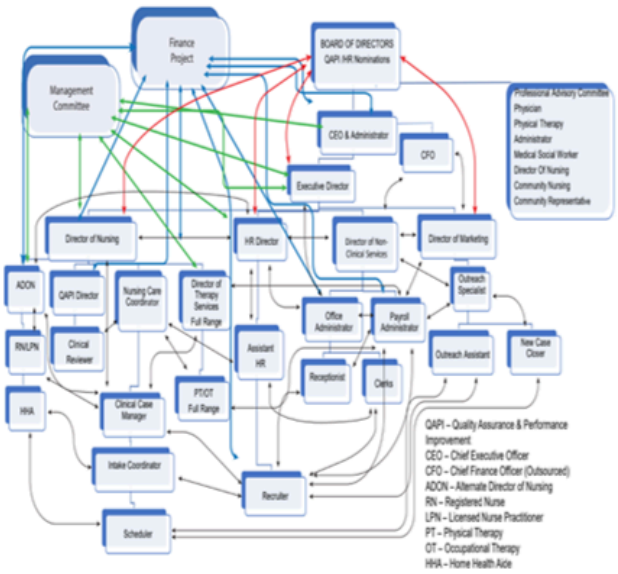
[4] Snowden, D.J., & Boone, M. E. (2007). A Leader's Framework for Decision Making.
Harvard Business Review, Vol. 85 Issue 11

[5] Goldstein, J., Hazy, J.K., & Lichtenstein, B.B. (2010). Complexity and the nexus of leadership: leveraging nonlinear science to create ecologies of innovation. New York: Palgrave Macmillan., p. 3.

Tendayi & Starr (2025)



Prevailing Org Chart Organogram



Reality Org Chart

A Call for HRM

It is time to change the mindset of HRM, which may require redesigning HRM curricula taught by academic institutions and HRM professional organizations. This is important to address the gap in HRM approaches when confronted by a VUCAH context. We believe that systems thinking is the pathway by which the HR function will be recognized as an essential voice that enables business sustainability against a chaotic and complex context.

By
Regina Tendayi
and
Larry M. Starr

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Workplace Flexibility in a Forgotten Sector

Ryan Bartlett
Labour Relations Officer
RB Human Resources

When studying in the field of human resources, labour relations, and industrial psychology, we often hear the call to become a change agent to promote work-life balance. The question becomes whether work-life balance is a luxury for those working in international or top corporate companies that have the budget to afford it. What happens to the small business operating in your local town, possibly suffering from burnout? What support do they get, and who is going to provide them with advice?

These questions were explored in the author's research on workplace flexibility in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector within the Sedibeng District. The research highlights an issue of burnout amongst ECD practitioners and owners, and a clear sidestep from the boundaries created by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No. 75 of 1997. The research found that ECD owners/managers work on average 56 hours and 40 minutes per week, while ECD practitioners are working 49 hours and 5 minutes per week (Monday to Friday), exceeding the legislative standards. Most ECD managers/owners who participated feel that workplace flexibility is a luxury they do not have. They cited issues around the lack of government and financial support as barriers to implementing a workplace flexibility model or programme.

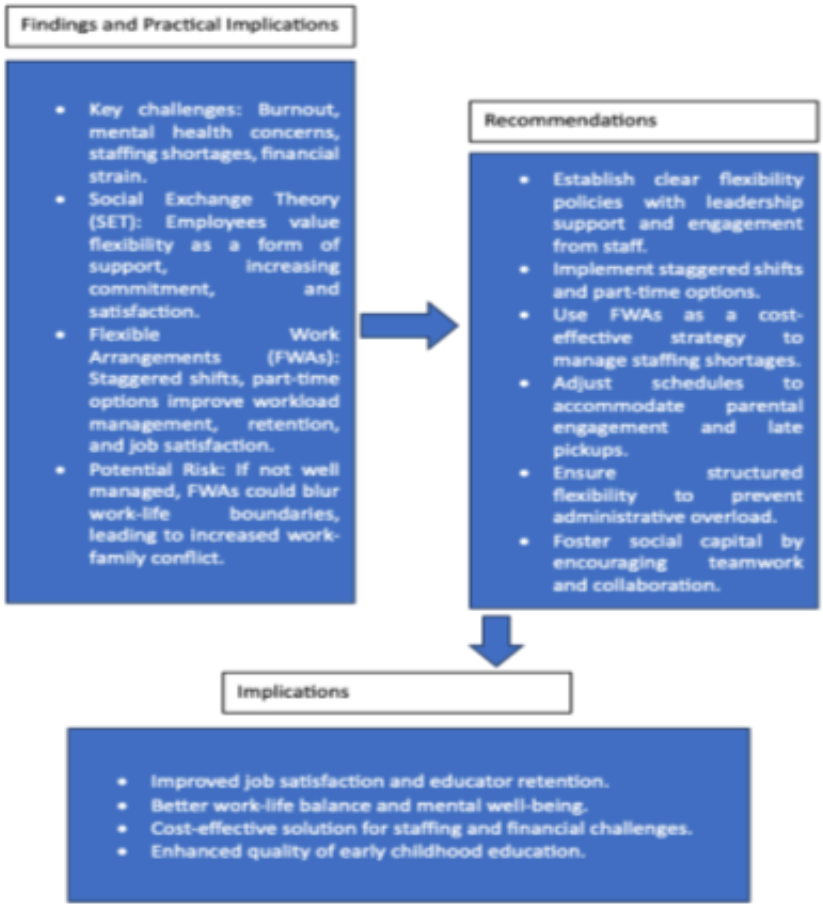
This leaves ECD centres in a critical situation—pushed to their maximum with the little they have—resulting in high turnover rates. This may have a negative effect on the quality of education provided to students in the early learning years. The research proposed a framework for the ECD sector which is specific to the sector and to the needs of the individual ECD centre.

Policies need to be clearly designed to fit the needs of each centre. For example, having half-days once a month may dramatically increase morale, as seen in a case study done at one ECD centre. This may work on a rotational schedule where all staff work from 07:00 to 13:00 when most children are present. After 13:00, students normally start going home, leaving fewer children and reducing the need for all staff to be present. This is merely one example of how a half-day policy may work within the specific context of an ECD centre.

This may further help reduce costs while promoting a better work-life balance and organisational culture for staff. It may also boost teamwork and unity as staff work towards a common goal of increased flexibility. The Social Exchange Theory aligns with these findings, as the theory explores how both employer and employee benefit from mutual exchange. Flexibility should not be seen as a luxury or benefit, but as a necessity for the long-term sustainability of the sector.

By implementing tailored, well-managed flexible work arrangements, ECD centres may create a more supportive and sustainable work environment—thus improving both educator well-being and the quality of early childhood education.

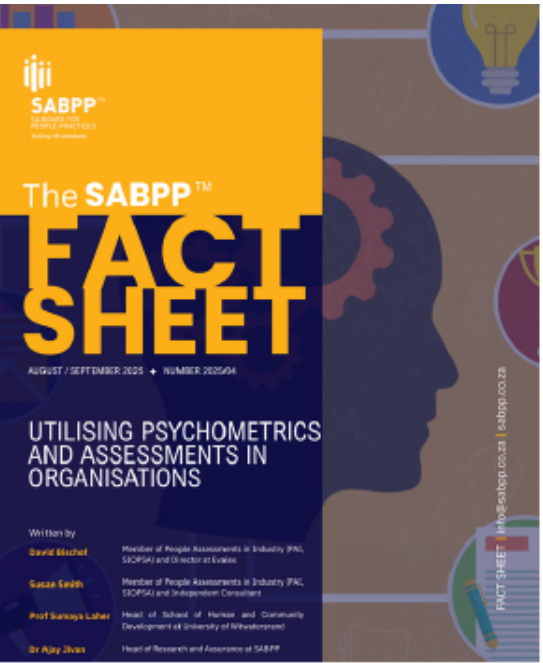
The below diagram is taken from the study as a practical framework that may be used and replicated to fit the needs of a specific centre (Bartlett et al., 2025):



This framework may also be amended or adjusted to fit the needs of Start-up, Small, and Micro Enterprises (SSMEs), as these businesses usually do not have an HR officer or department to assist with policy development or implementation. HR is not typically found in these spaces and thus they need access to information to better understand the effects of burnout and the impact that the lack of work-life balance may have on employees.

In conclusion, it is imperative that we as HR, LR, and IOP practitioners do our part to spread awareness and offer assistance to support the greater good of our communities. We must not only be change agents for large businesses, but also for our local business sector. Demel (2022) stated that "change begins at home", so why not start with our ECD centres, schools, and even our corner coffee shop?

1. Bartlett, R., Keyser, E. and Gresse, W., 2025. Exploring workplace flexibility in the Early Childhood Development sector within the Sedibeng District. Master's dissertation. North-West University.
2. Demel, T., 2022. Change begins at home. \[online] UNDP Accelerator Labs. Available at: https://www.undp.org/acceleratorlabs/blog/change-begins-home#:~:text=March%201%2C%202022&text=My%20grandmother%20used%20to%20say,?"%2C%20and%20the%20like. [Accessed 3 Jul. 2025].



FACT SHEET AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2025

David Bischof, Susan Smith , Prof Sumaya Laher, Dr Ajay Jivan

In today's fast-changing workplace, the ability to make informed, strategic, and ethical decisions about talent and the wider workforce is more important than ever. Psychometric assessments can play a key role by offering data-driven insights into an organisation's talent and workforce, especially their capabilities and potential. However, one of the critical issues to be addressed is how organisations use assessments. In this Fact Sheet, we review the use of assessments. We examine the current assessment landscape, which is being transformed by legislative reform, technological advances, and the increasing concerns from stakeholders. The Fact Sheet begins with the People Practices and Governance System Standard (PPGS), which provides an enabling framework for good people and HRM practices within organisations. It then looks at organisational realities regarding the use of assessments and the different roles of the Health Professional Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and Assessment Standards South Africa (ASSA) in promoting good assessment practices.

Read more...

THULI SEGALO

isa successful entrepreneur, a Professional Associate at GIBS and an ICF PCC qualified Business Coach. She has extensive experience in leadership development and group dynamics. She's also the founder of Better Me Business Coaching that focuses on enabling leaders to develop and enhance their coaching skills. She coaches leaders across Africa. Thuli is passionate about Africa and thrives on supporting and witnessing leaders achieve their maximum impact.

BY THULI SEGALO

An African Approach to Traditional Coaching

Coaching is becoming an increasingly important tool to help African leaders meet the business and personal challenges they face on a day-to-day basis. While South African coaching models have typically drawn on a western paradigm, I prefer to approach each interaction by asking: "How can we enhance the coaching of African leaders to make it more relevant to the African context?"

IMAGE SHUTTERSTOCK

Apply for GIBS Leader as Coach programme here: https://www.gibs.co.za/programmes/leader-as-coach---gibs

Uniquely African challenges

Africans have a long history of fighting colonial legacies, but now they are emerging confidently as leaders with their own distinct voice. However, there are a vast array of issues influencing African leaders, which coaches cannot ignore. For example, most African countries, including South Africa, are shaped by profound diversities in cultures, languages and traditions. Not only must leaders be attuned to these, but they must also continue to deal with a legacy of colonialism and western patriarchy. Coaches need to question and understand these influences and how they manifest in society and the workplace.

In addition, in leading African economies like South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya, to list just three, leaders are also being challenged to tackle the demands of competing on the world stage and in global markets that are dominated by fast-moving technological progress. At the same time, fundamental basic issues of poverty, unemployment, social inequality and a lack of infrastructure and resources continue to dominate the landscape, as they do in many emerging markets.

...embedding trust is vital to the African leader...

Coaching effective leaders

Given this delicate balance, professionals who coach in Africa have to recognise and understand the African milieu. This is not to say they need to rule out the western influence to coaching and the value it has brought to the profession, but rather that there needs to be an appreciation of the adaptation required to suit leadership coaching which speaks directly to the African leader's unique challenges.

On the one hand, coaches must recognise the value inherent in the foundations of coaching; these are constant and do not change. For example, the insights of 1980s business coaches like Graham Alexander and Alan Fine, together with Sir John Whitmore's GROW (Goal, Reality, Options and Will) model and other International Coach Federation competencies are still extremely influential in Africa's coaching framework. These models are process driven and goal orientated, and they call for the coach to help identify each leader's goals and what action steps are needed to achieve these ambitions.

That said, it must be recognised that by tailoring this approach to better suit Africa's unique challenges, the coaching experience can be even further enhanced.

How do you go about achieving this? Firstly, it is vital that coaches get to know their clients intimately, as multifaceted individuals. This helps to build trust and develop a rapport. This level of connection allows the coachee to be genuine and authentic, and enables the coach to develop a keen appreciation of where this leader has come from, the trials they've faced and how they have overcome these to achieve success. Once the relationship has matured to this stage, only then is the client truly ready to start working on their current challenges and the issues at hand. They are able to say: "I trust you in this relationship, so let us start the journey of you helping me to explore the issues, get to a solution, and help me get a clear vision of where I am going with this."

Once a partnership of this depth has been solidified, coaches can then get down to work. But again, they cannot apply the traditional approach of simply jumping into the process of identifying goals, rather coaches must start by framing the process of goal identification within the context of the challenges facing this leader, address those, and only then develop a strategic action plan.

Chairman of the Africa Board for Coaching, Consulting and Coaching Psychology, Dr. Mongezi Makhalima calls this a 'fit-for-purpose' approach that requires coaches to be extremely versatile and able to adapt their approach to suit each situation. Coaches have to know exactly what each client requires from a session. It can never be the coach's agenda – it is always the leader's agenda that drives the process. At all times, the individual must be at the centre of the process.

Makhalima clarified this idea when he wrote in a 2018 article for *Leader*: "It is important to keep in mind that coaching is not about balancing the numbers: it is about developing individual capabilities for exponential collective impact. Like trust, respect and loyalty, it has no formula."

Action through being

While embedding trust is vital to the African leader, what is increasingly becoming a drive across the continent is for African leaders to be motivated into action. Facing myriad issues across all spectrums of society, African leaders do not have the luxury of time and they cannot afford to prevaricate over decisions which have the potential to positively impact the continent. As such, there is no doubt that action needs to be a critical focus of coaching. To this end, a focus on marrying action-driven coaching with a humanistic African approach will certainly ensure a far richer outcome.

...they must also continue to deal with a legacy of colonialism and western patriarchy.

This starts by creating a supportive space that gives leaders the room to think through challenges and approaches. Coaches should spend time allowing the leader to 'be'. This process enables Africa leaders to better understand themselves and their context. It sets up the coach as the supportive companion capable of creating a place of safety.

GIBS Research Associate and business coach, Dr. Natalie Cunningham, speaks to this well when she talks about coaching

providing a reflective, quiet space. She believes leaders must take time to reflect, as this helps them to unlock their strategic thinking and establish what they need to do to achieve their objectives and – all importantly – achieve results.

To enable coaches to effectively create this space, I believe coach training, specifically in the African context, must focus on teaching coaches the competency of listening, attending and discerning; shifting from mere questioning to inquiry. Again, while this is not unique to coaching an African leader, it is critical for both context and being attuned to one's coachee. This approach has become much more necessary in a fast-changing and volatile world where the pressure to perform is growing and an action-directed approach dominates.

An expanding footprint

As coaches, it is our role to guide leaders towards their goals with confidence but, in the African context, it is also about helping clients to tap into their cultural values of *Ubuntu* (compassion and humanity) and *Kgotla* (a public meeting, community council or traditional law court). It is about humanising not only the relationships between the coach and the client but also giving African leaders the 'permission' to carry these values into their leadership roles.

Coaches should spend time allowing the leader to 'be'.

Here again, coaches can help by modelling how leaders should respond to their employees. After all, effective coaching should empower leaders to be coaches themselves and this can and should play out within the coaching environment, giving coachees an appreciation of how they need to show up as leaders capable of building relationships by showing an interest in their employees and helping them thrive.

These values are central to the relationship paradigm of African leaders, where trust and collaboration are key concepts. But it is important to acknowledge that this is not a purely African concept. Business coach Jenn Wicks says: "As organisational coaching grows in popularity, more and more leaders recognise coaching as a way to achieve business results by focusing more on people, not only as a way to be better at business, but also to be more in alignment with core values and emphasise the human side of the modern workplace."

The coach must never lose sight of the fact that creating capable and sustainable future leaders is an honour and a privilege, but also a great responsibility. What leaders take away from coaching sessions should still have an impact on them five years down the line, and the effects of this investment should ultimately ripple through a leader's organisation and across society.

To achieve this, I believe coaches need to be both relevant in understanding the "macro-context" of their coachee (cultural, social, economic and business) but also focus on the human effect of coaching. In this way, they are also attuned to the 'micro-context' of their client (the emotional and internal reality of the leader). Coaches need to genuinely say: "I hear you". They must acknowledge the person before them, delve into what makes them tick and use these insights to unlock ideas capable of growing leaders to think beyond their narrow view of their own potential. Coaching is about giving leaders the confidence to strategically achieve desired results.

In the African context, this is made all the more challenging due to the realities and tensions inherent between action and 'being', between global and local and between the individual and the collective. But, when African leaders can approach these dichotomies with confidence and authenticity, they can serve effectively.

It's up to the coach, however, to unlock this magic.

FIVE TIPS FOR COACHING LEADERS IN AFRICA:

1. **Coaches need to gain a holistic view of their clients by inquiring around the biases that influence their leadership styles in the broader African context.**
2. **Recognise that there is strength in diversity and acknowledge the power of being African.**
3. **Embrace the principles of *Ubuntu* and *Kgotla*. By understanding the idea of community relationships and an appreciation of where the African leader comes from, coaches can create the space for African leaders to be themselves.**
4. **Take a balanced approach that embodies the best from both western and African frameworks. African leaders need to be action-driven and get results, but not at the expense of the leader as a person.**
5. **Coaching needs to be relevant to what African leaders need, globally and locally. It needs to honour global challenges within an emerging market context. In business coaching specifically, this means understanding business in an African context.** GIBS

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Learnership & ETI Fraud: Why Sponsor Companies Need to Investigate Before They Invest

by Anton Visser, Chief Operations Officer of SA Business School

The Skills Development component of B-BBEE scorecards has created a large and robust training industry. However, while many organisations deliver quality learnerships and skills programmes, an alarming number are exploiting the system and the corporate sponsors of learnerships. The consequences extend far beyond financial loss.

In a country grappling with a staggeringly high youth unemployment rate, this kind of exploitation constitutes cruel treatment for vulnerable young people who enter learnership programmes expecting genuine training, work experience, and fair compensation.

Instead, they receive inadequate training while unscrupulous providers claim fees from sponsors under the guise of learnership training costs. At SA Business School, we're aware of unethical entities pocketing millions of Rands, while providing substandard learnerships.

We believe that this phenomenon undermines the fundamental purpose of learnerships: providing new workforce entrants with meaningful experience and training in formal working environments, to facilitate their path to sustainable employment and career growth.

Sponsor beware!

The foremost problem occurs when learners are hosted at the training providers' facilities, with little to no oversight or involvement from sponsors. Many learners hosted by unethical training companies receive no meaningful work experience. Despite loud claims of thousands graduating annually, the lack of proper oversight means learners obtain qualifications they never truly completed, leaving them no better positioned than when they started.

Substandard programmes also defraud SARS, sponsor companies, taxpayers and the learners themselves.

For the corporate sponsors of learnerships, it's critical to conduct thorough due diligence, maintain ongoing oversight of training providers, and remain involved with learners, to avoid inadvertently funding exploitative, subpar learnership programmes.

Warning signs that sponsors should look out for:

1. Employee Tax Incentive (ETI) Fraud

The ETI aims to encourage youth employment by reducing employers' PAYE obligations while maintaining employee wages. But unscrupulous learnership providers may advise sponsors to register learners as 'employees', to claim ETI allowances against monthly payroll PAYE. Essentially, this constitutes creating false employment to claim incentives for trainees, rather than genuine employees.

With SARS intensifying its crackdown on abusive ETI schemes, businesses face severe financial and reputational consequences, including repaying illegitimate claims (with interest) and losing tax compliance status. In this case, the sponsoring company bears all risks, facing additional SARS assessments, penalties, and potential labour law violations.

2. Excessively Low Learnership Costs

If your company is paying well below market-related rates per learner annually, consider it an alarm bell. Quality learnerships require substantial infrastructure and resources from classrooms, workplace experience facilities, learning materials, qualified facilitators, assessors, and full-time lecturers/trainers.

Have you personally visited your training provider's facilities? Can they demonstrate legitimate, quality workplace experience environments and training facilities where learners complete their practical hours in real work settings? Legitimate costs cannot be significantly discounted without compromising quality and deliverables. Don't ignore this major warning sign.

3. Learnerships of Less Than 12 Months

Learnerships require learners to complete specific notional hours at 10 hours per credit, with most programmes ranging from 120-150 credits. This necessitates a minimum of 1,200 work experience hours, typically achieved over 12 months of full-time engagement. Any provider claiming completion in less time should raise immediate concerns.
Verify your training provider's completion rates: How many learners successfully finish programmes? What percentage secure employment post-completion? SETAs mandate 100% project completion, 90% learner retention, 80% national certification achievement, and 70% permanent placement with host employers.

4. Restricted Access to Learners/Facilities

As the sponsor and employer, you should be able to meet and engage with your sponsored learners at training facilities during working hours - without restriction. If an unexpected visit results in unavailable learners or evasive responses from your training provider, this may indicate potential fraud.

There is, unfortunately, a growing trend of illegitimate providers exploiting system gaps in disparate SETA databases, registering identical learners for multiple simultaneous learnership programmes across different SETAs, and claiming fees for undelivered training.

5. Inability to Facilitate Learner Absorption

The B-BBEE scorecard emphasises absorption, encouraging sponsors to employ learners post-programme. But companies outsourcing learnerships for unemployed individuals or people with disabilities often cannot provide suitable employment environments, typically relying on training companies for absorption. Providers unable to facilitate learner absorption, particularly for disabled participants, present another warning salvo. Absorption is crucial. Without progression to gainful employment, learnership programmes merely perpetuate cycles of unfulfilled expectations and demoralisation among young people.

Success Story: Meaningful Impact Through Proper Implementation

In the last six months, SA Business School has successfully placed 250 South African learners into permanent positions, following completion of Contact Centre (NQF 2 and 4) and Business Administration (NQF 2) learnerships. Companies in manufacturing, engineering, financial services, food and beverage, and healthcare sectors provided full sponsorship, including covering training costs and monthly stipends for disabled youth aged 18-27.

The majority of these positions were created within SA Business School's BPO partner network, which specialises in debt collection, sales, and customer service, with additional placements in sponsor organisations.

Get involved in the learnership journey

It's important to work with ethical, credible training and education partners that have the best interests of your business, employees and learners at heart. Get involved with your training provider and your sponsored learners, to ensure that your investment in skills development and youth employment delivers for our country, our economy and your bottom line.