

Editorial Commentary

## Stop digging: regenerating science for an inclusive and sustainable future

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*If you would understand anything, observe its beginning and its development*  
- Aristotle

Healey's first law of holes is, "if you find yourself in a hole, stop digging". Over the years others have added to that law. The second law say "if there is any open hole fill it" - and third law says "any hole not filled now will cause more damage in the future". The first law is attributed to a British politician Healey- following an interview with the Statesman magazine in 1986. Thus, others have referred to it as "Healey's first law of politics" (Guardian, 2015).

Although popularized by Healey, the first recorded use of this saying dates back to 1911, where the Washington Post published the original saying on the sixth page. This saying reads:

*nor would a wise man, seeing that he was in a hole, go to work and blindly dig it deeper.*

The First Law of Holes simply mean "know when to stop". There are many societal lessons we can learn from this concept of stop digging. You may find this law relevant to your business, your political beliefs, or even your financial situation.

But the message remains all the same; if you find you are in trouble, it's best to quit whatever it is you are doing that has gotten you to this point. But first, recognize the hole you have dug. That is to say, the first step in finding a solution is admitting there is a problem. It might take a lot of pride-swallowing, but it is worth it, to be honest about what you are struggling with. To rise above your challenges, you can't continue to go downward. There are usually many factors at play when it comes to finding a solution.

The holes adage speaks to the society we live in. It has been littered with too many "may-tries", a great many experiments to the detriment of the economy, and people around. Tragically, citizens are often taken as pawn. In the 1980s - following the oil crisis - developing countries were faced with the need for structural reforms of their economies - which drove the privatization programme. While the idea was meant to promote efficiency, countries eventually were found in a hole. Each dug a hole. Many state-owned companies were sold, leading to massive unemployment and deepened poverty. The working class was sacrificed.

However, the best thing to do was to realize that they (countries) were in a hole, and then stop digging. The first step was to stop doing harm. Stop approving any more expenses and assess the situation at hand. This was never done.

Following at the heels of structural adjustments was outsourcing, which further shed more jobs. More also it led to a culture of profit making, and ballooned costs - again to the detriment and neglect of delivery of social services for the benefit of the citizenry. This leads to lessons of the second and third laws of holes. The existing holes were left open and are causing societal damages. Of course, the history of outsourcing dates back to the time of the Industrial Revolution, which began in Europe in 1750s. The Industrial Revolution led to the mass production of goods and caused the growth of markets and profits. Many companies experienced a shortage of local human resources, so they started contracting with third-party firms to delegate the accounting, legal, and insurance tasks.

Outsourcing is based on the economic principle of "opportunity cost". Outsourcing was not formally identified as a business strategy until 1989 (Kim, 2018; Gonzales et al. 2020). However, most organizations were not totally self-sufficient; they outsourced those functions for which they had no competency internally. One of the best examples of outsourcing, outstaffing, and recruiting is Japan during the reign of Meiji. The period that marked a place for itself in the history books as the Meiji Restoration, became a major reason for Japan's industrial rise later in the 1900's. Outsourcing is the buzz word of the new millennium - while companies are increasingly moving jobs offshore to cut down costs, the public is feeling cheated that their jobs are being "stolen" by cheap, foreign labour.

## The Process of Filling the Hole

Afrobarometer provides reliable and accurate data on the views of ordinary Africans, based on public attitude surveys conducted in more than 30 countries in Africa. A common public voice in these surveys is a sense of despair. Enough is not being done to assist the masses. Its not that nothing is being done by respective governments. In fact, a number of policy strategies have appeared over the past few years in which a pro-poor developmental state response to poverty is discussed. The challenge comes with the process of implementation - which fulfills the adage of the filling the hole.

At regional level, there is a drive for a pro-employment led economic growth. For example, in SADC it is evident that much of its economic growth, in the past two to three decades, did not translate into more and better jobs. Several structural rigidities have impeded further improvement in SADC's job outcomes. In fact, there is no clear structural transformation for many decades. Policies that are growth-oriented, that have worked for developed economies, have not worked to create productive employment for the growing working population in SADC. Proceeding with the same policies that focus on economic growth will maintain the same poor employment outcomes in the coming decades. Considering the structure of SADC economies, and to realized the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap - SISR (2015-2063), there is need for pro-employment policies that will alter productive transformation patterns. SADC should alter economic policy making (macro, sectoral/industrial, fiscal, monetary, trade, investment) so that they are focused on employment creation.

In the current SISR, science, technology and innovation (STI) has been identified as a critical element. Put differently, the focus is towards regenerating science for an inclusive and sustainable future, with a commensurate STI policy. However, lacking is policy coherence. STI Policy Coherence facilitates constructive social dialogue between policy-makers and various key stakeholders – from different parts of the government, parliamentarians, civil society, business and industry, philanthropists, among others – to identify and enhance synergies between interacting policy domains for achieving the National Development Agenda and related 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Policy Coherence Framework provides guidance on how to analyse, apply and track progress on policy coherence, setting through the perspective of policy interaction. Policy Coherence is essential to a balanced implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Collectively, STI promotes strong, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. It is broadly aligned with the objective set out in the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization. It confirms STI is an important lever for sustainable development, equality and poverty reduction.

Policy-remaking should address the key challenges of job quantity, quality, and accessibility of jobs. SADC should aim at realigning its industrialization strategy towards maximizing employment outcomes for the poor. There are a number of ways of focusing solutions for jobs and to further strengthen job creation, job quality, and job access. Among others, innovative industrialisation strategies should go beyond

sectoral approaches that target only manufacturing, but instead would need to generally focus on sectors with high potential to create more and better jobs. SADC can accelerate industrialisation by promoting all six economic value chain clusters, identified in the SISR and SADC Action Plan (2015-2030), with employment targeting being one of the considerations to stimulate growth and accelerate structural transformation. Industrialisation and value chains (VCs) present real opportunities only if employment is factored in.

## In this issue

Nine articles are presented that capture various strands of solutions for the present challenges our society is facing. The first article by [Chikadzi](#) argue that the social enterprise model of operation can be adopted as a cheaper and effective alternative economic model which can replace the practice of outsourcing. The model is framed from the current stage in the evolution of outsourcing, which is the development of strategic partnerships. [Chikadzi](#) demonstrates that outsourcing of support service functions to private service providers has largely resulted in poor welfare for workers and escalating costs of service provision. The social enterprise model of operation represents a viable, workable and progressive alternative to outsourcing. In their paper, [Ochurub and Jeremiah](#) assessed the operational efficiency as well as the use of valuable resources and strategic capabilities within the rail transport industry/sector in Namibia. [Sifani and others](#) compared the performance of the two National Systems of Innovation for Namibia and Botswana and how they influence national economic development and competitiveness.

Other papers evaluated the knowledge, attitudes and practices towards COVID-19 prevention measures among patients in Windhoek ([Ntumba et al.](#)), considered the role of work engagement and work meaningfulness on turnover intention of nurses ([Moyo et al.](#)), while [Katukula and Kambeyo](#) conducted a systematic review of the impact of research in education, whereas [Lwendo and Isaacs](#) did a qualitative analysis in evaluating service delivery in Namibia. [Mothowanaga and Gladwin](#) called for a re-think on the implementation of secondary school curriculum. Taking the history curriculum - as a case study in the Khomas region of Namibia - they recommended that teachers should try to collaborate with other history teachers, especially in the their circuit, while regular trainings and workshops in various circuits should be held for all history teachers with a follow-up system in place to ensure that the trainings are effective. [Kazembe](#) presented a perspective on data ecosystem for enabling domestication of STI in Namibia.

## References

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