

Inkomati Flows

21st Edition

A weekly newsletter from the office of the CEO

Once again I feel humbled to welcome you to this space. Just this past week, the ICMA played host to the visitors from the FETwater, which is programme for research, education and capacity building in the water sector in South Africa. Funded by the Flemish government in collaboration with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, the programme is a creation of a request in 1998 by DWAF for support from UNESCO to assist with the assessment of existing education and training capacities versus the new training and capacity needs. Indeed, the assessment was conducted in the 1998 and concluded that the implementation of the National Water Act would be seriously jeopardised unless human resource needs and related competencies are met. It further indicated that capacity building would be needed if South Africa was to equal the task of implementing Integrated Water Resource Management.

Operationally, decision-making structure of FETwater is a Steering Committee, members are appointed by the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry. The executive Committee is an advisory body to the Steering Committee and consists of representatives from DWAF and the Water Research Commission. Furthermore, there are focused groups which have been established to pay attention to some themes like catchment management strategy. The 18 member team was from the following institutions:

1. Statistics S.A
2. Ghent University(Belgium)
3. Department of Economy, Science and Innovation (Belgium)
4. University of Free State
5. Arcus Gibb
6. University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
7. University of Western Cape
8. UNESCO
9. Tshwane University of Technology
10. Institute of Water Research (Rhodes University)
11. Water Research Commission
12. University of Venda
13. Bioassets

In the same week, another team from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) also came through to take forward the collaborative working relationship with the ICMA regarding the development of a **learning strategy for the ICMA**. You would remember that last they came down to do some work in Sabie-Sand sub-catchment pertaining to the transformation of Irrigation Boards. This is when we shared with them our philosophy of *learning for work excellence*, and they immediately got attracted to it

to an extent that they even offered to assist with the **development of the learning strategy for free**

Building networks

These two delegations composed of academics from the universities both in the country and abroad bringing us to the reality that as the first CMA in the country we have become a point of focus from institutions of higher learning in South Africa and beyond. Without doubt, the ICMA is fast becoming a living case in IWRM.

Prof Mark Dent, the leader of the FETwater delegation, based in the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, has slowly accustomed to be a friend of the the Inkomati CMA. The first meeting with him was in August 2006 when the CMA administration was about four months old. Since that time there has been constant contact between us and him. He has emerged as one of key proponents of the catchment management agencies. Small wonder, the ICMA has since been a recipient of his inspiring leadership letters on CMAs.

Each time an opportunity to show-case integrated water resource management approaches at a catchment level presents itself, his first line of call is the ICMA and he bring them down here. This is a clear demonstration of confidence on the ICMA.

In the course of last year, the Chairperson of the Technical Committee of the Board, Advocate Cas du Preez, hoisted a delegation of Aussies who were working with AWARD on a project with commercial farmers. In our discussion with the Prof Mark Dent, he made a commitment that he will do his best to get the Aussies to come back to share with us their experience on catchment management. It will be interesting how this water scarce country develop their strategy and implement it.

Learning, learning and learning

The choice we have made is to put the ICMA in a leaning curve. Inevitably, an institution that is not anchored on learning will lag behind the rest, use concepts that are old and meaningless to others. An organization has to open up to learning in order to be relevant to its stakeholders and have the intrinsic capacity to respond to the problems that it faces.

In a paper entitled: “Learning to learn for social-ecological resilience: balancing strategy options in public sector organizations”, the authors, Dirk J. Roux et al say:

“An organization learns through its individual members. Therefore, the degree to which organisational learning takes place is determined by the quantity, quality, focus and coherence of learning that is practiced by its members. It would thus make sense for organizations to have strategies in place to understand the learning process in relation to their mandate and strategic objectives and to deliberately advance those conditions that enable good learning practices”.

We will greatly appreciate the moment our learning strategy will be delivered by this team of able members of the CSIR. Our part, therefore, will be to create those enabling conditions that will get learning to be both effective and efficient.

Amazingly, the universities are already ready to learn from us who have been here for a short space of time. Further, this demand of us a serious commitment to our work in order to provide insightful comments to the unavoidable inquisitive and probing questions these guys will always be ready to ask.

Keep watching this space!