



Winter School **News** **RANDS & SENSE**

New views from the best young minds

Are you listening, Minister?



Wednesday 13 July. Here's what some of you are saying about public economics in South Africa right now. Are you listening, Minister Gordhan?

Is Treasury doing enough monitoring of government spending?

Samantha Kee is working on her Master's in Economics at UP. Her research is on fiscal and monetary policy. "I like macroeconomics," she says. "And I'm interested in helping households." Samantha got interested in public economics through Treasury's annual Budget talks at the university. She's in the tax policy and design theme here at the Winter School. "What's public economics without revenue?" she says. But she's also interested in learning about creating incentives—for investment, for SMMEs—as a growth mechanism. Samantha is insistent that monitoring is crucial for effective spending, and she isn't sure Treasury is doing enough of it.

Theory has to be something doable

Malindi Msoni is already a practicing public economist. She's in an entry position with the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research, Zambia's "premier economic think-tank". She's also doing her Master's at UWC. "I never thought I'd end up wanting to work in the public sector," she says. But Ada Jansen and Krige Siebrits were her lecturers, and their work sparked Malindi's interest. "Everyone deserves

access to basic services, and government ensures this through public policy. I want to contribute to moving income from the rich to the poor," she says. Malindi would like to keep moving between academia and practice. "You can't separate them," she says. "Theory has to be something doable."

I want to know what our government is doing about development

Chola Machuta heard about the Winter School from UCT's careers office. "It sounded like a good opportunity to get myself out there," she says. This Honours student's main interest is development economics, and she wants to find out how that fits into public economics. Government is largely responsible for development, she says, "and I want to find out more about what our government is doing." After graduation, Chola would like to work internationally, for example at the UN or the World Bank. She wants to be in a position to influence changing the lives of the poor.

There's much more going on in Treasury than fiscal policy

Philip Odendaal's Honours at Potch is focused on risk management. He's chosen the industrial economic competitiveness theme, because he wants to diversify his knowledge base. Philip is keen on a career in investment banking. But talking to Treasury's Ian Stuart ... *Continues on page 2*

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From page 1...

Talking to Treasury's Ian Stuart has got Philip Odendaal interested in public economics. "There's much more going on in Treasury than fiscal policy," Philip found out. Philip is curious about why government doesn't use private equity investment, for example when redistributing farms.

The big picture must inform detailed decisions

Andre Steenkamp and Judith Mboweni are both in Treasury's Economic Policy division, and in the tax policy and design theme at the Winter School. "Yesterday was brilliant!" Andre says, talking about Day 1's presentations. Judith described Treasury's Brown Bag lunches, where colleagues get together to discuss issues related to their work. But it's rare to be exposed to the Winter School level of quality and experience. "We're too busy to read articles and books by these thinkers," says Judith. "We end up only reading what we have to at work." But they agree that the high-level overview that Day 1 provided is crucial for making the specific, detailed decisions required of these two Treasury officials.



Speaking out in public

Yazi Genu is at the Winter School to learn more about everything he can. This BComm Economics Honours student from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University is aware that a space like this is good for practising your presentation skills. "I want to learn how to speak well in public," says Yazi. "I want to express my ideas and table questions." He also wants to learn how deal with difficult questions directed at him. "You will get asked questions that take you beyond what you know," he says. "How do you deal with that?"



Tuesday afternoon in the health reform and social security theme was an introduction by immersion, explained Anja Smith, the strategy being to give students as much as possible as fast as possible so that they have a foundation for the in-depth work to come.

In the first session, presentations by Adam Wagstaff and Ronelle Burger explored time and cost in health services, *and time as cost*. Adam sketched concepts and models and Ronelle honed in on waiting times for health services in South Africa.

Power relations in health services

"But what exactly causes these long queues?" **Francis Chiparawasha from UWC** wanted to know. "Is it a lack of staff?" Ronelle explained that the way systems and management are organised are powerful elements in the mix, though staff numbers do matter. She also drew attention to the role of power relations. If, as a provider, you're not dependent on your user in some way, you don't have to be accountable to them. If, as a user, you're paying the provider, or influencing their advancement in some way, you have some power over them.

UJ's Thomson Sithole picked up on this, speculating that waiting times don't impact on the rich as much because the rich tend to be aware of their rights and entitlements. This knowledge allows them to be more assertive.

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Winter School 2016