

My lessons from the current Eskom situation – to help us all learn...

By Chris Lew 15 Feb 2015

The current state of electricity supply has many South Africans seething. Given the dire outlook, this is expected. Even without the huge negative impact of load-shedding people generally love to complain and more so when they've been inconvenienced. We also love to defame people who inconvenience us and when we whine we take random pot shots at everyone we have chosen to dislike. So complaining and condemning others has become a common human past time and, in our current society almost everyone can express any opinion on just about any matter – whether it is sensible or not. Complaining does not serve to improve anything if it is not backed with constructive action.

This is what we need in RSA: More people to work for improvement; to work for unity and to set the example of doing what is right instead of wasting so much time, money and energy trying to prove that they are right. Constructive criticism is useful, as is healthy debate but, only in environments when those who join the conversation are mature and secure within themselves. In such cases we talk and listen to one another and the dialogue serves to help us reflect on our state of affairs and we then learn from the different views. This is how we ought to make progress, learning from the past and learning from one another with the view to improve the future.

However, when opinions are passed on with the primary intention of slandering and condemning others we only add to the chaos. As more and more people join the conversation, we see more aggression. We find insecure people defending their positions and more offensive slanderers trying to prove that they know better. Sadly, humans are self-righteous individuals who habitually put others down so that they may appear to be right. It has become apparent to me that some people are even hoping to see Eskom fail just so that they may get a chance to say something like, *"I knew it! I told you so!"*

Fortunately, this habit can be changed. Let's be sensible. We must hope and pray that they do not fail because we all need to progress and we need a stable supply of power for this. We need one another! We must prosper together or sooner or later we will perish together. It is in tough times like we are now facing that we need people who will work to make us stronger and unite us, instead of setting us apart through selfish agendas.

It appears that our electricity woes can be attributed to things like:

- Poor maintenance on equipment and existing plant and delayed production of new plants.
- Bad planning and inefficient preparations for future requirements.
- Wasteful expenditure on wrong priorities and even possibly due to corrupt and/or flawed tender practises.
- Breakdowns due to the lack of skills, poor work ethic and negligence, etc.

The root cause of the Eskom situation may be found in many failing organisations, and also in many families/households. Many such bodies face the same disaster and so their stability and future prospects are threatened.

Confucius said, "To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must cultivate our personal life; and to cultivate our personal life we must first set our hearts right." Following this advice I looked at my own life, and found that:

- In my own home I have also been guilty of poor maintenance and like Eskom I must do more to look after my assets and do more to maintain the structures that support and bring meaning to my life. This includes relationships with family members, staff and the people I deal with and so on. This may prove to be more important than the equipment in our home.
- My planning for the future in many areas of my life seems good in theory but lacks application.
- I have also been guilty of wasteful and irresponsible expenditure I am now paying a heavy price to recover.
- I have delayed action in the past on many key priorities, which added stress to my life and to the lives of those who depended on me.
- Things in my household often suffered due to unexpected breakdowns, negligence and poor upkeep.

In many ways I have been as guilty as the Eskom leadership and now I must learn from this in order to progress. I am not an Eskom fan or a beneficiary of any sort, but what does it *help if the pot calls the kettle black*. My success is dependent on their success. I must learn from what I teach, practise what I preach and help as best I can; so this is what I aim to do and I hope many South Africans will join me:

- I will use energy sparingly, conserving as much as possible and I will ask all in my household to do the same.
- During blackouts I will celebrate the short reprieve that our atmosphere may get when we are burning less coal and other fossil fuels.
- I will work harder and smarter to reduce the negative impact of blackouts on our lives and on our livelihood. In this way I hope to save the emotional energy that may be wasted due to depression, frustration and negativity.
- I will work hard to avoid being affected by the rise of nastiness that spreads so rapidly during blackouts, etc.
- I will do my best to set the right example, so when I complain about anything I will also set my heart on looking for constructive ways to contribute towards improvement.
- Our world seems desperately short of leaders who will consistently do the right thing, so I will pray daily for God to help us shape a new brand of leaders for the future; people loaded with competence and integrity. I will also pray for God to help our leaders act in the interest of the people they are supposed to serve and to be honest about their dealings. If that fails I pray that He will help us raise new and better leaders for the future.

I make no excuse for Eskom management, present or past or anyone who has contributed to the disaster we are facing, but I want to see them succeed and I must help wherever I can. There are many things that I can't do anything about, but I must focus on the things that I can do. Mostly, I must pray for our leadership to see the Light: the Eskom problem surely reveals many of the root weaknesses in our society and we can all learn from it, and the wise will grow through it and work to get their own houses in order before it has a negative impact on others.

God help us all seek and find the urgent remedial action that we need to heal our land.