

Dr Petrus Letaba's Experience with the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy in South Africa and Africa

Dr Petrus Letaba joined the Department of Engineering and Technology Management at the University of Pretoria, in 2020. Prior to that, he was a Senior Specialist: Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Measurements and Evaluation at the National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI). This role and other previous positions prepared him to be among the leading scholars locally in Africa on STI planning, monitoring and evaluation.

For STI planning, Dr Letaba specialises with technology roadmaps for sociotechnical transitions and technology foresighting. Technology roadmap is a long-term plan that links the future market needs with the required products, technologies and research and development programmes. Recently, he was part of a team that developed the Nanotechnology Commercialisation Roadmap for the Department of Science and Innovation.

Technology foresights are useful in determining the possible, probable and preferred future. This future planning technique is gaining prominence due to rapid technological change associated with the fourth industrial revolution, climate change, Covid-19 pandemic, and so forth. Dr Letaba recently co-lead a team for conducting the STI Foresight exercise for the government of Botswana as part of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Industry (UNCTAD). He was a Project Manager for the 2018 – 2019 South African STI Foresight exercise that determined the STI priorities to be used for the 2022 – 2031 STI Decadal Plan. Furthermore, on STI foresight, he was recently part of the Enterprises University of Pretoria (EUP) that was tasked by the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) to conduct a study that can lead to a foresighting framework in the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

On STI monitoring and evaluation (M&E), Dr Letaba is a lead writer for NACI's annual publication called the South African Science, Technology

and Innovation Indicators Report. This report assesses the state of STI in South Africa and it has been used in the past to inform the STI policy making within the country. The users of this report in the past included the NACI (in generating advices), Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Technology Innovation Agency (TIA)'s Board Strategic Planning, Economic Sectors, Investment, Employment and Infrastructure Development (ESIEID) government cluster, etc. This report is likely to be useful in leading the discussions at the annual STI Plenaries and the Inter-ministerial Committee on STI.