

It's more about CONSTRUCTING A LIVELIHOOD than choosing a career

By Dr Gloria Marsay

The economic crunch has changed the world and left it in shatters. People are unemployed, because they don't have relevant marketable skills, and have not adapted well to the changed techno-economy. Jobs are scarce because needs have changed.

Finding a place in the world of work is more difficult for young people than it was for their parents. Now more than ever, it is essential to provide our young people with appropriate skills to navigate their way in a constantly changing world. The mind set of young people needs to shift from choosing a career to constructing a career; from finding a job to finding work that needs to be done. It's more about planning a livelihood than choosing a career. Career construction is a lifelong and dynamic process that



will need to be visited and revisited several times during a person's life and requires essential skills.

What skills do learners need?

1. Marketable skills

Young people need to learn hard marketable skills that will give them definite opportunities in the world of work. Whilst it is important to encourage young people to follow their dream, their dream needs to be market related and realistic. General Education and Training is fundamental. However, the key that unlocks doors in the world of work is the ability to transfer knowledge into action.

2. Entrepreneurial skills

Jobs in the formal sector are becoming extinct. So, to survive, people of all ages are forced to construct and reconstruct their own careers, create their own jobs and become self-employed in the informal sector running small business enterprises.

3. Critical and innovative thinking skills

Young people see things differently and should be encouraged to use their creative skills to make changes in the world. If we want to see positive change, we need to change our approach. Bill Gates and Steve Jobs are examples of people who have turned their innovative thinking into success stories.

4. Personal agency and self-navigation skills

The skills shortage in the country can present young people with interesting opportunities if they are willing to become self-navigators. The giant leap from the secure structured school environment, into the insecure and unstructured world of work is daunting. No wonder some of our young people fall into an abyss of chaos and desperation! They need the tools and skills to develop and manage their lives, and be able to market themselves with confidence.

5. Adaptation skills

The ability to adapt and reposition oneself according to the needs displayed in the economy requires lifelong learning and is a process that never ends.

6. Decision making skills

Making decisions is difficult because of the uncertainty prevailing in the world of work. Young people are overwhelmed by too many choices, and often don't have the skills to make informed decisions.

7. Good work ethic

A good work ethic is one of the most important skills for success in today's world of work.

What can schools do?

Schools need to equip young people to become authors of their own destiny. Our Catholic schools are well positioned to provide young people with these powerful tools that are value based and will provide self-fulfillment within the context of dignity, equity and service to humanity.

1. Teach entrepreneurial skills. The approach to teaching entrepreneurial skills is two-fold. Young people need market related skills, as well as personal skills as described above. They need a firm sense of identity and need to be aware of their strengths and unique abilities.
2. Incorporate work experience into the school curriculum. The irony of the present day world of work is that young people need work experience before they can find someone to pay them for the work they can do. Establishing a network within the school community that will allow learners to do volunteer work or shadow work so that they gain experience. In this way, learners will be able to explore the possibilities

“The most serious of the evils that afflict the world these days are youth unemployment. . . .the young need work and hope but have neither one nor the other. “

Pope Francis

“We need to review our education system to produce young people for the job market of today and not yesterday. Every school should have an entrepreneurial programme to teach pupils how to turn their passions into commercial ideas, how to team up with kindred spirits, how to market themselves and how to make money.”

Clem Sunter

available in the world of work and to build a network of people in the industry of their interest. Exposure to the world of work provides young people with valuable informal learning, and empowers them to make evidence based decisions.

3. Teach young people how to forage. Help them to look for work opportunities and find learnerships.
4. Teach learners how to build impeccable portfolios of evidence and CVs for themselves and at the same time develop contactable references.
5. Teach decision making skills. Help learners to look at the positive and negative outcomes of all the decisions they make. To make a good career decision, young people need to be able to integrate self-knowledge with knowledge of the labour market.

To arrive at a good answer, one needs to ask a good question. The question that young people can ask themselves is “What can I do that will make me happy, that will contribute to the smooth running of the community in which I live, and that will provide me with a livelihood?”

In South Africa, we triumphantly refer to our young people as the Born Frees, but sadly they may become the Generation Jobless unless we empower them appropriately.

If you need further assistance, you can refer to the book *Career? Sorted!* which should be available at your local library or directly from the author marsay@global.co.za

