

Why Workers' Day is actually about education

By [Tebogo Mchine](#)

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At over 25%, South Africa's unemployment rate is one of the highest in the world. One out of every four people who are eligible to work can't find employment, impacting everything from the country's political and economic trajectory, to the physical, mental and emotional stability of its households.



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Although alarming, this figure is cast in a different light when one takes the qualifications of those looking for work into account, demonstrating that South Africa's employment crisis is actually an education crisis instead.

Of the 27.1% unemployment rate reported in the final quarter of 2018, 57.1% of those who were unemployed didn't have a matric qualification and 34.2% did. Those who had some form of tertiary qualification numbered only 6.3%, however, and those who were graduates amounted to a relatively minor 1.7%. The mathematics of this is simple: even in a country with the economic uncertainty of South Africa, the higher your level of education, the higher your chances of finding work.

But being skilled and educated isn't just an advantage for job seekers, it's also in the best interests of those looking to further their professional prospects, and of employers too. Here's why...

The benefits of making education a workplace priority

Without oversimplifying the matter, educating and upskilling employees can be the tipping point between the success and failure of a business. Employees who feel that their personal development is prioritised by their companies are more motivated, confident and loyal, and are more likely to feel committed to their companies' future. Promoting a culture of learning can also result in a steady influx of fresh and innovative ideas, helping to sustain businesses and maintain their relevance.

Informed and skilled employees are more likely to become experienced and capable leaders – something on which the future economic success of South Africa depends. Fortunately, the traits required to make a good leader can largely be taught, provided they are communicated accessibly and their benefits clearly demonstrated.

In a country with such a high rate of unemployment, businesses also have a responsibility to contribute to long-lasting transformation. On-the-job learnerships that include theoretical knowledge and practical training, such as the Effective Leader programme run by Media Works and Juta and Company, offer the means to achieve this.

Workplace education in practice

Effective Leader has recently been adopted by the Safety and Security SETA to provide management training to 50 supervisors working in the security sector across Gauteng, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape. Since Effective Leader is ranked at NQF level 5, it requires only a matric, and offers higher education and training that many of its learners have never had access to before.

The knowledge and skills provided through Effective Leader are not only necessary for these learners to perform their jobs properly, but also serve to broaden their professional horizons and improve their future employability. Learners are taught how to give and receive feedback, how to deal with conflict resolution, and how to balance the many priorities required of

their positions. The course makes use of a variety of multimedia formats at different times of the day to ensure that companies' productivity is never compromised.

As we look to our workers this Workers' Day, and to those in such desperate need of work, we need to recognise that we – the public and the private sector alike – have a role to play in prioritising education every step of the way. If we do, we are all collectively contributing to the lowering of our unemployment rate and to the growth of our country.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tebogo Mchine is the human resources director of Media Works. Effective Leader is a SETA-accredited National Certificate in General Management (NQF level 5), which is offered as a learnership by Media Works in partnership with Juta and Company.

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