

Unemployment: What's to be of our future?

It's no news that both global and local unemployment stats have peaked at alarming rates. The problem begins with primary and secondary education or, more importantly, the lack thereof.

The most recent Unemployment Statistics for Quarter 1 of 2013 have been released. These figures show the stark reality of unemployment:

- The number of unemployed individuals reached 4.6 million in Q1:2013
- 65,3% of the unemployed have been looking for work for a period of 1 year or longer
- 59,4% of the job seekers did not have matric
- The unemployment rate amongst the 15-24 year olds (52,9%) remains the highest among all age groups and has been on the increase
- The 15-34 year olds accounted for 70,7% of the unemployed persons
- Students accounted for the largest share (40,5%) of the not economically active (NEA) population
- Approximately 3,5 million (33,5%) of the 10,4 million persons aged 15-24 years, were not in employment, education or training in Q1:2013

There are many socio-economic factors that affect an individual's situation, their education and in turn the job they can - or cannot get. Not everyone makes it to Matric, which - considering the current trend for hiring of candidates - doesn't bode well for their own future or that of their family, community and country. But, there are options.

The SACOB Solution

The South African College of Business (SACOB) is looking for ways to offer a solution to this problem.

Graduate recruitment is an international movement to spot the highest, best and most suited talent coming through tertiary education. SACOB is proposing that this not only be about graduates, and that by offering positions to the capable - yet unemployed - the drastic figures prevented above could be addressed.

Companies educating their employees will reflect positively in employee retention and gives the individual a better foundation on which to plan for their own future and the future of their family too. Through these efforts of promoting internal training and on-going education, SACOB can help companies convert school leavers into trained and productive employees.

BEE Scoring, SARS Tax Deductions

Provided the businesses own mandatories can be met, there are many good reasons for organisations to help employ and

educate the unemployed.

- SARS - SARS tax allowances enable employers to make deductions per learner from their taxable income for implementing learnerships. The Section 12H allowance includes two types of deductions for a one year learnership: an annual allowance of R30 000, as well as a R30 000 completion allowance when the learner has successfully completed the learnership.
- SETA - Companies can apply for grants from the SETA to whom they make SDL contributions as well as from FASSET, the SETA for Finance, Accounting, Management Consulting and other Financial Services, under whose scope the qualifications fall.

With a combination of these grants and deductions, it could ultimately cost a company next to nothing to employ someone and facilitate their studies by partnering with SACOB. BEE scores are also awarded to organisations that can show they are enriching the educational development of previously-disadvantaged individuals.

Think about the loyalty factor from an employee who wasn't hired because they had experience, but because they had none and were coached and groomed into the best-fit position for the company. The benefits are threefold: a hopeful future for the individual; SARS and SETA benefits for the employer; and a reduction in the national unemployment figures which works to resurrect the economy as a whole. More jobs mean more people receiving salaries. This means a greater spending power by the nation and a greater demand for the production, supply and delivery of goods and services.

The business end of all this business

SACOB is a business school offering a 'lecturer-led' online learning experience to students, businesses and to the broader African community. Being a specialist business college, SACOB recognises the importance of bringing their students a high touch learning experience and do this by effectively integrating technology and education.

SACOB's Online Classroom is an interactive and supported learning experience for students. It offers learning material, videos, quizzes, forums and live chats with the Lecturers and other students. The sophisticated Learner Management System (LMS) allows for the monitoring and reporting of employee's or students' progress throughout their course so detailed reports can be presented to employers. What makes SACOB's offering distinct is that technology is used to combine the interactivity and connection of face-to-face education with the flexibility and cost-saving advantages of distance learning.

Studying online means that employers aren't subjected to down time in productivity as their employees no longer have to attend classes during the workday or leave early to get to an evening class in time. The online structure also accelerates learning with students having access to videos that they can watch repeatedly as many times as it takes for it to integrate. Learners also have direct access to their peers by means of forums and messaging, and also have access to a dedicated lecturer on demand.

SACOB lecturers are industry experts. Their experience, knowledge and expertise mean that they're proficient in theory and practice.

Next steps?

Obtaining the necessary forms and completing workplace skills plans, to help companies apply for the relevant rebates and grants are handled by SACOB who is looking to partner with business in this initiative. For these learnerships to work you need three elements - an employer (company), an employee (student) and a training provider (SACOB).

Case Study

By way of example, SACOB has experienced this phenomenon first hand with one of their bursary students. In 2012, SACOB undertook to educate the youth of Africa by offering bursaries. Edson Zhou (24), who worked at vida e caffe in Hout Bay as a part-time manager at the time, was a successful applicant and received an ICB Junior Bookkeeper bursary.

After completing two of the four courses that makes up the Junior Bookkeeper qualification he was approached by the owner of Habari Media with a job proposal. The owner, Adrian Hewett had seen Edson studying online at vida e caffe during his lunch hour. He got chatting to Edson and before Edson knew it he had been offered a position as a trainee accountant.

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