

How 2020 may equip students to make an impact beyond expectations

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The Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted life as we know it. Crucially, it is disproportionately affecting our youth and driving up our already dire youth unemployment rate.



South Africa's future relies on the collective contribution that our youth are going to make to business and society, so it is critical to address issues related to their education, inclusion and futures right now. To get South Africa to a place our youth would want it to be, they need to be enabled to be part of the conversation and the journey to get there.

So let's talk.

In our annual gathering to mark Youth Month, Coronation hosted an interactive webcast with more than 60 finance and business students to discuss issues they are currently facing. Some were members of investment societies at the University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape (UWC) and Stellenbosch University, while others were recipients of Coronation's Bursary Programme that we support over the long term.

#YouAre... *courageous, conscious and committed*

The theme for our meeting this year was #YouAre. As they head into the workplace after graduating, #YouAre speaks to recognising the valuable contribution these extraordinary young people can make to help our society adapt and grow.

There is a huge increase in the crises the world faces compared to even 25 years ago and this affects anxiety levels. Not only has this year been a shock to our youth's education curriculum, but also their career prospects and progress are likely to be affected by changes in future employers' training and employment plans, and lower starting incomes than envisaged. And our broader challenge as a society is to create a more inclusive environment for our youth, one in which everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

In a poll we did with them, 56% said they feel like events in the past few months have significantly impacted how they think about their future. A key learning is that it is critical how you frame your response in times of crisis, as that will ultimately determine how you react.

We need to focus on the things that we can control and equip ourselves as best we can for future crises. In today's world, you have to keep evolving your skills and insights. Skills that our business have had to draw from to succeed through lockdown have been resilience, adaptability, resourcefulness, self-discipline, empathy and optimism. And, above all, in our business you need curiosity, which we have been able to nurture despite working remotely.

And these traits would stand students in good stead to navigate an uncertain and changing world, no matter what job or industry they decide to pursue. The truth is that we should never stop learning – and students should embrace their own education as a lifetime journey.

Go out and make a difference

It has been a devastating year for millions given the global Covid-19 pandemic, with resulting economic hardship and, most recently, nations grappling with the deep wounds caused by generations of discrimination and injustice.

At Coronation, we will continue to be a part of driving change through our long-term youth-focused programmes. Both the business and our employees in their individual capacities have given back during this crisis by donating to the nation's Solidarity Fund and other relief initiatives we have funded include delivering food vouchers electronically to the vulnerable.

When we all get through this, we'll be stronger, more focused and with a better view of the new world we need to create together, not just in the financial or economic sense, but also in terms of the environmental and social aspects of life and how we need to live. So I urge the youth to remain steadfast, positive, and engaged in order to set themselves up now for a successful future. And always seek opportunities to learn.

So as stressful as the current circumstances are, 2020 is equipping our youth like no other year to be ready and prepared to take on their futures and the responsibilities that go with it. We know that, with the right support, the future of the youth of South Africa can still shine bright.

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