

GIBS youth survey reveals political interests of SA youth

The annual Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) youth survey of high school students (average age 17) revealed that, despite what the older generation may think, youth are following political issues rather than specific politicians. This is in sharp contrast to the past when politicians came first.



Image Source: Musina Online - Students and Career Guidance Teachers from 10 local schools attended the GIBS Career Expo thanks to De Beers

Contrary to the perception that youth are not interested in politics, the survey revealed that an average of about 33% of respondents were quite interested in politics. Over 3/5 of the respondents believed that people should follow politics in order to become more informed about how policy-makers make decisions that affect the country as a whole.

The survey includes responses from close to 1,000 Grade 11 and 12 learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and schools around Gauteng who took part in the survey at the annual GIBS-MTN Career Expo in Johannesburg as part of the GIBS Spirit of Youth (SoY) high school leaders' programme.

Nearly half of those surveyed (48.8%) believed that South Africa's future was bleak and that certain interventions such as political engagement were needed to change that sentiment. With 1/3 (33%) acknowledging that national politics somewhat affected their future, a resounding 60% believed that people should pay attention to what was happening in South African politics as this had an impact on their future. It would seem however that the youth had mixed feelings about views expressed in parliament and how representative of communities these views were.

Compared to 2012 survey results where 74% of the respondents surveyed then believed that South Africa would be a great place to have a successful career, this year only 48.8% still hold onto that positive sentiment. Respondents in 2012 believed 2016 was going to be a better year than 2012 with regards to job prospects and economic growth, however, it would seem ongoing jitters about an imminent global meltdown, South Africa's negative growth prospects and China's declining growth are among the issues these youth are basing their sentiments on. When asked about furthering their studies after high school, only half believed they would have access to quality tertiary education that would adequately equip them for the job market.

Carmelita Davey, senior manager of the GIBS Centre of Leadership and Dialogue which runs the SoY programme said, "The results show that there is need for creation of platforms which allow for on-going engagement with the country's youth. It is the responsibility of established leadership to seek the youth's viewpoint and opinion on issues that matter, and not only when a crisis hits. Doing so will create a more inclusive culture thereby ensuring a pipeline of credible and authentic future leaders for our country."

Jadey Bosman, a manager who runs this programme added that while the survey tried to touch on as many issues as possible, it was clear that further creating opportunities for positive youth engagement was needed in order to ensure a pipeline of worthy, high quality future leaders. She also emphasised that the survey and the year-long SoY programme has revealed that the youth are no longer willing to sit on the side-lines and wait for things to happen to them. They want to take charge and have their voices heard to achieve the dream of having a more socially cohesive society. If their voices are silenced and side-lined for too long the consequences may not be palatable to leaders in business, government or society

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