

The importance of educated training choices

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Building a career path isn't quite as easy as enrolling at university, completing a course and seeking employment. Before applying to university, college or enrolling in a short course there are many decisions that need to be made and circumstances to consider. This can be an overwhelming experience, and the confusion about what education really is exacerbates the situation.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, education is: "the action or process of teaching someone especially in a school, college, or university"; "the knowledge, skill, and understanding that you get from attending a school, college, or university"; or "a field of study that deals with the methods and problems of teaching". This definition is solely connected to schooling and university. Business dictionaries on the other hand define education as: "The wealth of knowledge acquired by an individual after studying particular subject matters or experiencing life lessons that provide an understanding of something". This implies a certain amount of transfer from a book to an action that does not need to come from formal studies.

If a definition of the word "education" cannot even be agreed upon, what difference will putting the word "education" in the spotlight make? An essential starting point in deciding what and where to educate oneself would be to determine exactly what it is that the country needs as a whole, rather than as sectors and government departments, and then determine a definition for these needs. Although it seems the logical process, the first principle of problem-solving should be followed; define the problem properly before looking for solutions.



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Determining whether the chosen institution is the right fit is a daunting process, one which depends on why the person is studying to begin with. If their choices have been made for them by well-meaning parents, teachers, or advisors, but they have no real passion for the subjects or career, the type of institution is really not going to make a difference. The choice of the right institution starts with well-defined career choices and advice. The choice of institution should be the second step in the decision making process; after the learner has a definitive road mapped.

The Institute of People Development (IPD) places large emphasis on the importance of matching the right person to the right career, and then developing the skills in that person to enable them to make a success of themselves. An advising and selection process is followed when a learner enrolls in order to assist in placing them on the correct path. Although valuable support is given, learners are not restricted to following the suggested path; it is up to them to evaluate the information at hand and make an informed decision.

Evaluate the current level of skill in the area being considered

When choosing a career path, it is also important to evaluate the current level of skill in the area being considered. Obtaining a degree that will take you into a saturated market won't aid in finding sustainable employment. Education, Training and Development (ETD) and management are critical skills shortage-defined careers. Therefore IPD learners have the added advantage of knowing that they will be employable, and will in turn uplift and enrich their learners and teams in the future.

When deciding on a learning path, be it the learner him/herself, the parents, HR directors or ambitious employees, making informed choices is possible if the correct approach is taken. It is essential to seek the advice of specialists in the field. Evaluate the reasons why the learner is choosing the particular course; have they made the choice for the right reasons? It is also important to ensure that the correct type of course is chosen. Confirm the accreditation, international comparability,

employability possibilities, industry and professional body recognition of the course, access to internships and learnerships and scope of the career before making a final decision.

There are many choices available, and the process can sometimes result in an overload of information, but it is essential to ensure that all the options have been considered. When considering a particular course or institution, evaluating their differentiators, track records and the quality of their programmes can assist in taking the right decision. At IPD, for example, quality, relevancy, passion and experience are its essential differentiators. The Institution has had accreditation since 2000 and graduates an average of 100 new ETD practitioners into the marketplace every year, while certifying hundreds of Assessment Practitioners, Skills Development Facilitators and Learning Programme Developers. To ensure that no time is wasted, the Institution offers ETD and Management Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programmes, providing a model that has garnered a submission rate of 88% for RPL.

Unemployment has created awareness that having the correct qualifications is beneficial. To educate with a view to creating sustainable employment and career development is the key. To capitalise on this, enrolling at an institution that is in exactly the right place at the right time is vital. Choose qualifications or short skills programmes that are occupationally based with a strong academic foundation while providing career pathing and personal development planning.

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