

Skilling young people as water ambassadors

As we celebrate Youth Month, we really need to take a closer look at how skills development can empower young people for meaningful economic involvement.

On the other side of our notoriously high youth unemployment there are crucial skills shortages.

We cannot continue talking about a skills shortage in a country with free education when our tertiary institutions are overflowing with students.

This means there is something we are doing wrong.

We need to sit down and assess what skills are required and encourage our youth to prioritise those fields of study.

This is how to close those gaps and meaningfully contribute to both development and reducing the unemployment – by equipping young people with the skills and education necessary to thrive in this rapidly evolving global economy.

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is doing its best to contribute to this with a Water and Sanitation Education Programme creating employable young people.

The programme entices young people from primary and high school levels into the water and sanitation sector.

It exposes them to the water and sanitation business, encourages innovation, and provides bursaries for excelling learners to pursue studies and careers in the sector.

It encourages young people to be water ambassadors in their communities and spread the messages of water conservation, protection of resources and infrastructure from vandalism, and promotion of proper sanitation and hygiene practices.

Responsible communities are crucial for water security, especially as South Africa is a dry and water scarce country.

We need to encourage the youth to acquire marketable and sustainable skills. In this evolving economy, the youth also needs to be flexible and adapt to the changing marketplace.

With the right skills and support, the youth can become entrepreneurs and assist in reducing youth unemployment by employing other young people.

In as much as the conditions can be made conducive, the onus lies with young people to take charge of their lives, take advantage of available opportunities, and develop themselves for a better life.

Let us empower the youth through relevant skills development, empowerment programmes, and financial support to ensure that our young people are well equipped to compete and play a significant role in the world economy.

Let us invest in the skills development and empowerment of our youth to reduce youth unemployment and create a better country for all. The youth is the future, so let us take care of our young people. — **Themba Khoza**, national water and sanitation department