

Skills Development

I'm sure that you've heard it said before; qualifications and academic records are not the be all and end all when it comes to finding a job. Employers are interested in attitude and evidence that applicants have consistently gone above and beyond what is expected of them.

The easiest way to illustrate the latter point is through developing the key skills that employers look for. Interpersonal skills, the ability to communicate effectively and proactive problem-solving are just a few of the skills that are useful, regardless of industry. That's why they're known as "transferable skills".

How can scholars develop transferable skills?

Extra-curricular activities

The easiest way to develop these skills is through involvement in extra-curricular activities. For example, any form of community service facilitates the development of interpersonal skills as learners begin to understand how to interact effectively with people from different backgrounds. Even in-class exercises such as conducting presentations to the class, facilitate the development of important communication skills and confidence in public speaking.

Work experience

Any form of job shadowing, work experience or a part-time job facilitates the development of a variety of skills. From interacting with difficult customers to understanding how to behave in a professional work environment, the learning opportunities are endless.

Step-by-step guide to skills development

Teach the terminology

Before learners can understand how to develop these skills, they first need to understand the terminology that you, as a teacher, think of as

second nature. Structure a discussion-based session on understanding important terminology such as networking, commitment and business understanding and how to develop these skills.

Identify skills that have been developed

Learners will already have started to develop transferable skills through their involvement in extra-curricular activities to date. Identifying the skills that they have begun to acquire will enhance their understanding of how to develop them further, and give them the necessary confidence and inspiration to do so.

Create an action plan

The next step is to ask each learner to develop a personal action plan for their skills development. They should ask themselves questions such as: where are my biggest skills gaps? How can I develop these? When putting together an action plan, it's important that learners include dates to hold themselves accountable to.

CV writing exercise

Complete the process by having a class on CV compilation, after focusing on skills development. The effect is that learners are able to see how essential their skills development is, when it comes to compiling a unique and dynamic CV.

TO SUMMARISE

Generally speaking, employers don't want straight A students who are completely academically orientated. They want all-rounders who can display that they have developed key skills such as interpersonal, leadership and communication skills. They want to see that applicants have consistently gone above and beyond what is expected of them, by getting involved in extra-curricular activities and gaining work experience. ■



Joanne Wood is the founder of Achieve Careers, an organisation which specialises in providing the necessary support and resources required to ensure that educators are able to provide their learners with practical, up-to-date career development information. To receive regular career information updates, visit Achieve Careers on Facebook or follow Achieve_Careers on Twitter.

To find out about Achieve Careers' CV Workshops for LO teachers, contact Joanne on joanne@achievecareers.co.za or visit www.achievecareers.co.za



Lesson Plan

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Grade 9

Throughout your life you will learn to develop a wide range of skills and abilities. Such skills are acquired through academic studies, extra-curricular activities and your experiences. This is one of the very first things we must think about when making a career/job/vocation/profession decision.

REMEMBER:

Try to choose something that you are good at.

"Skills are very important as they are the currency used by job seekers – you get paid in exchange for your skills."

DEFINITION OF SKILLS: Skills are specific attributes, talents and personal qualities that we bring to a job, as well as the procedures that we learn on the job. Skills are literally what you have to sell.

Three types of skills

1. Functional skills

These skills are not necessarily associated with any specific career/job/vocation. Rather they are used to accomplish a number of general tasks which are work-related, for example: drawing up of schedules, minutes of meetings, diagnosing and responding to problems, communicating with staff members and other people.

2. Content skills

These work-content skills are very specific and specialised to one's work – for example, computer programming. The computer is programmed in such a manner that it will analyse the blood of a person, determine which blood-borne disease the patient has and so forth.

3. Self-management skills

Self-management skills include personal attributes like cooperativeness, intrinsic motivation, the ability to learn quickly, etc. In this set of skills, one also finds emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is made up of skills such as self-awareness, empathy, persistence, optimism and social skills.

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