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HIGH LIFE

#Choosing an Education

Data Friendly Version

Choosing an education

THAT BEST SUITS YOU

Lesson One

Why education?

The education specialist

Taelo Jonathan Mathuloe (AKA TJ), takes on many roles within the education space including ICT support specialist, freelance creative and academic writer, tutor, and general lover of learning.

TJ has tackled a vast amount of academic qualifications, courses, and a current degree all to further his knowledge and skill set. He is currently working as an intern instructional designer for the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Academic Technologies.

Within these short modules we will be providing guidance and insights into the realities of formal education. How to navigate the vast options to choose from and when is the right time for you to jump in!

Formal education is South Africa and how to get in

Once you have progressed through the high school system, you may attempt to pursue a diploma or degree. It is best to do some research on the institution that you intend on applying, usually in Grade 11, to see what programs are available to you. Each formal program will have a registration certificate number that is assigned by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training.

The benefits of formal education

Whether you are aiming to become a business owner or setting yourself up to gain a long-term career, formal education provides long term knowledge, skill sets, values and attitudes which are essential for your development and social contribution.

The purpose of these formal programs is to socialise young adults into the fundamentals of the working environment, whilst building industry knowledge.

Distance over Residence

With the current issues faced of a global pandemic, the traditional practices of learning at a campus with lectures has been shifted to allow for continued learning. More and more courses and formal programs are facilitated online through digital channels to allow students to complete their studies uninterrupted.

There are many benefits however to the traditional approach of resident participation, as well as the greater reach of online education. Therefore, it is often best to find a solution of a hybrid learning system, to allow for online learning blended in with the traditional face-to-face teaching. You will need to figure out which method of learning best suits you. Regardless of your choice, it is always important to create a network of students and peers to collectively share and relate to the challenges and opportunities to come with a formal education.

Lesson Two

Too many choices?

A Formal degree

Within the job market a formal degree qualification remains highly valued and a requirement for many specialist careers. This maintains the importance of obtaining such a qualification especially if you are pursuing a career over entrepreneurship.

However, the relevance of formal degrees is being questioned within the modern generation due to the constant change in information and relevance to the world around us. The entrance of the fourth industrial revolution and the limitations faced by the current global pandemic, have forced a shift in the true value of formal degree programs. Whilst a completed degree still holds its value in the job market, the content being taught may need to be redefined within our education system.

There remains a high number of unemployed youth within South Africa and some continue to struggle to find a job even with a formal degree completed. This confirms that a degree qualification does not guarantee a job for those once graduated.

Certificates and Diplomas

These were often dismissed in the past as a lesser qualification to that of a formal degree program. However, these specialised programs offer greater exposure to the practicalities of an industry and promotes an achievable skill set.

What matters is the career path you have in mind, as both a degree or diploma will contribute to your development and knowledge you have for the interested field of study. Some jobs require a degree and no less, others prefer a specialised program that has more relevant and specialised skills.

Research the type of career you are wanting to pursue; current job openings are a great place to see what the education requirements are to qualify for such a position.

Keeping it social !

The importance of mentorship programs and support groups can never be over emphasised. There is a need for you to be part of a community and be exposed to the work expected and the overall benefits. Along with peer participation, professional support plays a vital role in fostering an appreciation for the field of choice.

LinkedIn is a great place to broaden your mind over the career possibilities before you. Create a profile and build a network around the world of people you want to follow as a career. This will provide great insights into the realities of a career; the skill sets required and may even offer up a newfound mentorship.

Lesson Three

Personal preference

Looking for direction

There is often a struggle to decide on a formal qualification between one that is fulfilling and one that may be financially rewarding down the line. A helpful tip to decide on a course, is to take a personality test. This type of test will give you insights into what kind of a person you are and then you can list the type of jobs that would suit your personality and ambition. The financial rewards are important as passion and talent will not always pay the bills. However, a compromise can be found by choosing a formal education program that fits into the industry of which you have found your passion.

One size fits all

The most universal degrees or diplomas are those which offer skills needing in the current world and that of the future. So, any formal program that focuses on technology and understanding how it works will benefit you in the long term as these are not restricted by any context. These include courses like I.T, education technology, Data science and other technology related programs.

To Gap or not to Gap

A general gap year has many benefits and should be seen as an opportunity to acquire life skills such as networking, general work experience and to discover oneself. Often, we fail to recognise the importance of self-reflection, of which a gap year allows us to discover what we truly want out of life and our careers. Often the subjects and conversations in schools do not open your mind to the endless possibilities out there for us to chase.

Tips for learning from TJ



I hold the conviction that the impermanence of our existence warrants making the most of each day. As such, I spend most of my time improving my skill set and updating my knowledge. 

