

# SA needs job creators, not job seekers

Fixing education and providing better support for entrepreneurs is key to rebuilding SA's economy, Wits chancellor and entrepreneur Dr Judy Dlamini tells Cape Town audiences.



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SA's education system should be reconfigured so it can produce job creators, instead of job seekers, says Dlamini.

Speaking at a recent event hosted by LifeCheq, an organisation that offers goal-based and independent financial advice to professionals and entrepreneurs, Dlamini said that while SA's education system has improved since the dawn of democracy, it has failed to inculcate a culture of entrepreneurship.

The National Development Plan (NDP), a government blueprint for eliminating poverty and reducing inequality, has ambitious goals for boosting entrepreneurship in SA - including a target of 90% of employment opportunities to be created by small and medium enterprises by 2030. However, entrepreneurs continue to face many challenges such as red tape, a lack of access to finance and credit lines, the generally high cost of doing business, and lack of mentorship.

While there seems to be growing optimism around entrepreneurship in SA, the country has not seen this translate into numbers of new and established businesses.

"I think this government has done a lot [to improve education] considering where we are coming from. A lot of young people

will not understand what Bantu education did to us,” said Dlamini.

## **Fostering entrepreneurial spirit**

She said, however, that the current education system can still improve; especially when it comes to fostering an entrepreneurial spirit.

Pointing to the archaic structure of the education system in SA, and in most countries on the continent, Dlamini said: “The style of education has not evolved. We still have the teacher being seen as the reservoir of knowledge. However, both teachers and pupils should be seen as having a brain and being able to solve African problems. The current system means many are likely to become job seekers instead of job creators.”

Dlamini, who is also an entrepreneur, author, and philanthropist with a PhD in Business Leadership, offered up-and-coming entrepreneurs advice on how to succeed in the business world. Entrepreneurs, she said, should learn to embrace failure and learn from their mistakes in business.

“The first time you fail it hits so hard. My first failure was at medical school. What it did was it humbled me, but it built my resilience and I told myself that I will not be defined by this,” said Dlamini.

“Not all failures are lessons, but sometimes the lesson is understanding yourself better. You never know how strong you are until the only option is to be strong. It is important never to give up on your dreams.”

Both her parents had an entrepreneurial spirit which still drives her to this day, she said. And while access to financing is crucial for any entrepreneur, another important - and perhaps often ignored - element in business is “handholding”. According to Dlamini, “Mentorship and advice are invaluable”.

## **Innovation for Africa**

Abu Addae, CEO and co-founder of LifeCheq, who was in conversation with Dlamini, agreed that there is immense value for entrepreneurs in having a supportive community around them.

Addae, who describes himself as a “possibilist” (a term coined by the late Hans Rosling), believes that there are many opportunities for innovation in Africa and that entrepreneurs and innovators will need all the help they can get to take advantage of these.

“New, high-growth markets in Africa will demand innovation and create new possibilities for high potential entrepreneurs,” he said. “But the reality is that business building is a messy process and it is easy to fail. What is important is to plan well in advance so you give yourself the best possible chance of success, and are also in the financial position to be able to try again if it doesn’t work out the first time. It also helps to have a strong community of support around you to keep going, which is why LifeCheq focusses on both these aspects. We need a new generation of doers who, as author Nic Haralambous says, ‘Fail better, learn better and, most importantly of all, repeat, and repeat and repeat.’”

LifeCheq hosts regular free events in Cape Town and Johannesburg to connect like-minded people and provide support and inspiration to entrepreneurs and professionals. Events planned for April and May include “Africa & Tech: Megatrends that will shape your career” and “Up or Out: Planning your next big career move.”

For more information or to sign up go to: <http://bit.ly/LifecheqCareerStrategy>