

Youth entrepreneurship can help create wealth and in turn employment

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Believing that a multi-pronged approach is required to increase the levels of employment, support inclusion and social cohesion, a Gauteng-based entrepreneur has launched a boot camp to encourage the youth to consider entrepreneurship as a career choice, instead of looking to be absorbed into the already constricted job market.



Through Project Jala, a scholar entrepreneurship initiative, Lebona Moleli, founder of The Marketing Kraal and Lesaka Marketing Consulting, wishes to encourage the youth to be entrepreneurs so that they can to create wealth and in turn employment.

"Jala is a Sesotho word meaning plant a seed. In the first phase of the project, 60 grade 11 learners from Rabasotho High School in Diepsloot were assessed for the capability to participate in a week long entrepreneurship boot-camp during the school holidays," said Moleli who spent 17 years in the corporate sector before venturing into entrepreneurship 11 years ago.



With Statistics SA putting the unemployment rate at 26.4%, half of that number consisting of people under the age of 35, Moleli believes one of the solutions is to encourage high school learners to consider entrepreneurship as a career post their tertiary education studies.

From the 60 applicants, the top 10 learners attended the camp last week where they were taught the basics of entrepreneurship including business planning, marketing, branding, financial management and operations management, including site visits to businesses and factories to expose the learners to real business.

The learners were then given an assignment to develop an innovative business idea and present the business to a panel of judges. The students were judged on their innovative business idea as well as the implementation and scalability of the business. The top three learners won educational prizes to assist them with their grade 12 studies next year.

"Entrepreneurship helps grow the economy and gets more young people into jobs, especially given the slow job expansion in both the private and public sectors," said Moleli who hopes to make the entrepreneurship boot camp an annual event.

"For this to happen, it is important for young people to first understand that they too can also play an equally important part in tackling the challenge of unemployment. Indeed, promoting youth entrepreneurship cannot just be left to the government. It is everybody's responsibility, including the young people to contribute to effectively curbing the rising levels of unemployment," he said.

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