

# A Different Kind Of Education For The 21st Century

**The education emphasis should be on developing the whole person, says MARTIE DU PLESSIS**

Over the past twelve years I have worked closely with home educating families in South-Africa. I have become aware of their needs as home educators, as well as the problems they faced before taking their children out of public or private schools. I have discovered that many people find the school system inadequate to truly equip their children for life. No wonder

the labour market has complained that so many people are not equipped for employment, and a few years ago had to force the South-African government to adopt a different way of education. This is changing again in 2012, due to poor results in equipping people for real life. This time the change is to a more structured approach and a hope to manage resources and delivery of



textbooks to schools. I have encountered many families where the father is without work and finds it difficult to obtain a new job. Some of these fathers have as many as three doctorates. When speaking to them, it is clear that they have highly intellectual and innovative ideas; yet they seem unable to take the risk of starting something for themselves and their families. A totally hopeless situation!

The reality of so many families without hope has caused me to investigate the root of the problem. I have tried to find out what the requirements are for children to make it in the 21st century. We have moved from an Industrial age to an Information Economy. The resources in the Industrial Economy were raw material, real estate and cheap labour; whereas in the Information

Economy they are information, knowledge, skills and ideas. More than three hundred million people are connected to the internet. *"After forty years unbelievable progress, computer technology has finally reached its infancy"*. (Grulke) Anyone can choose to access the entire world's information and turn it into knowledge and skills. *"The reality is that information has no value, unless it is available immediately before you need it."* As soon as that knowledge is turned into a skill, and applied in the real world, the economy places enormous value on it. The new economy is skills-driven, not knowledge-driven. If you don't believe me, consider the average academic and what he earns.

It's only when we turn knowledge into skills – skills for which the market is prepared to pay – that true economy value is created. We are drowning in knowledge and information, but we are starved for skills. It's not what you know anymore. It's what you do with what you know that really makes the difference. *"The only scarcity is skills"*. (Grulke) Take a look at this table: (Taken from *"21st Century Impact on Business, Individuals and Investors"*)

INDUSTRIAL AGE	INFORMATION AGE
Learn a skill	Lifelong learning
Security	Risk-taking
Job preservation	Job creation
Capital equipment	Intellectual capital
Status quo	Speed and change
Hierarchical	Distributed
Regulated	Networked
Zero sum	Win-Win
Measure inputs	Measure outputs

It does seem as if the time is over when you could go through school and on to university or Technicon and know exactly what career you want to pursue or when it was still possible to create a future vision for the next thirty years with a pension fund and other securities. It is also now clear that many older people will not retire but *"be of significance to the next generation"* by offering an on-going service in the form of a skill or expertise. (Last Half- Bob Buford).

Thousands of people with the kind of training where they think they can predict their future by the institution they attend, are desperate and without employment because they are unable to adapt to the dynamics of the business world today. The new scenario is that people start their own business and work from home offices, often *"virtual"* offices.

The major careers of the 2020's will be in high technology and service industries, in leisure, tourism and education. The most sought-after characteristics will be entrepreneurship, flexibility, risk-taking and innovation. There will be fewer management jobs and a greater demand for leadership at all levels. *"Today, construction companies and builders are reporting exploding demands for home offices and studies, almost unheard of earlier this century except for the very rich."* *"The current projection is that the school children of today will change jobs twenty times in their lifetime. The future is dynamic and the old concept of stability associated with external environment (work, money, physical environment) must now become an internal quality (intuition, creativity, openness, courage, passion, faith, dedication, etc.)"* (Prof. Kobus Neethling). Projections show that only four per cent of matriculants will obtain employment. The emphasis in this century must rather be on the development of the whole person. Children should be able to work in a group as well as individually. Children should not only be trained in a specialised field, but also have a broader general knowledge and a willingness to learn, so that, if they have to make changes into another field, they can do so quickly. Children should be able to take risks, moving into new areas and promoting their own services. To keep in step with the needs of the times, it is important to be a lifelong learner; for this is the only way one can stay in tune with the demands of our fast-changing world. So, what can we as parents do in a very practical way?



We will have to go through a paradigm shift to set a different pace, and walk as visionaries with hope for the future. We have to facilitate our children's transition into a future of on-going change. *"Too many people live too much in the past. The past must be a springboard; not a sofa".* (Harold Macmillan) It is very important that we establish a good moral and value system in our children, based on the Word of God, to bring about godly character. Godly character comes through the disciplining processes of God in our lives. If we allow our hearts to be shaped by God, He can mould us to become more God-like in our characters.

A very practical solution is to start in our homes. I find that parents feel too sorry for their children and do not allow them to grow towards maturity and in godly character because they rescue them too easily from their mistakes. Children never learn the lessons of life if they are not allowed to suffer the consequences of their actions. An excessive emphasis on purely academic learning also denies children the opportunity to fully develop essential life-skills. We must allow our children to work equally on the following:

**Heart** (learning to serve the family and the community through daily chores without getting paid for what they do)

**Head** (thinking innovatively, investigating and studying without resistance – the schooling or educational process)

**Hands** (working with your own hands and learning how to bring in some income – for example, where family members work together in family businesses or home industries).

Children learning in this way will be better equipped to deal with the realities of life and will be shaped in their hearts to be hard workers, lifelong learners, innovative and creative thinkers, individual and group workers as well as servers of the community. They will also be calculated risk-takers, for they had the opportunities in their own homes to learn how to be stretched beyond their own comfort zones.

*"What a tragedy if we spend our whole life climbing to get to the top of the ladder, and when we get there we discover that it is leaning against the wrong wall."* (Stephen Covey) ▾

---

Dynamis is a ministry to support and inform families and educators. The goal is to serve and equip parents to make the most of their learning experiences by focusing on the uniqueness of their children and the realities of 21st Century business when equipping young people.



A New Generation of families | Specialised help to home educating families

Martie du Plessis | Educational Consultant and Remedial therapist

Cell: 082 57 4 14 33 | Fax: 086 642 7743 | E-mail: [martcham@vodamail.co.za](mailto:martcham@vodamail.co.za)

[www.dynamislearning.co.za](http://www.dynamislearning.co.za)