

Vodacom Youth Academy on track with 2025 goal

The Vodacom Foundation's Youth Academy is well on the way to meeting its goal of training 4,000 young South Africans by 2025 with important Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills. The Foundation will have trained just over 2000 unemployed youths by the end of the 2023/2024 financial year.



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The Youth Academy programme, established in partnership with Cisco, MICT-Seta and the Department of Basic Education, includes 12 demanding months of training, with the goal being to equip unemployed youth from impoverished backgrounds with ICT skills. At the end of the year, there is potential for these graduates to be offered internships and workplace experience.

Critically, Vodacom has started absorbing some of the youth academy graduates into some of its programmes, such as Schools of Excellence and partner NPOs, as paid ICT youth coordinators and training facilitators. In this way, the telco is contributing to job creation.

The Youth Academy is a vital initiative on many fronts, explains Takalani Netshitenzhe, external affairs director for Vodacom South Africa. For starters, it develops the skills of people who would otherwise not be able to afford educational opportunities. "When one considers that this training is offered free of charge but is valued at over R100,000, the impact of the Youth Academy is massive. It really does offer an opportunity for people to transform their lives," she adds.

Secondly, the Youth Academy is essential at a time when youth unemployment in South Africa stands at just over 60%,

says Netshitenzhe. This is higher than the national average and results in higher poverty and crime rates, as well as increased inequality, social instability and social exclusion. “Increasing rates of youth unemployment are a major challenge in South Africa.



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Solving this complex and serious problem demands that business and government come together to develop different strategies and initiatives to ensure that our young people have a fighting chance in this tough economy.”

And finally, if you look at our country’s skills requirements, we have to help young people develop the digital skills needed to fill the gaps. According to a recent report, the ICT skills gap in South Africa continues to widen, hindering the country’s digital transformation efforts. As such, it makes perfect sense to upskill young people so that we have the skills the market needs to help South Africa compete on a global stage.

Africa has the youngest population in the world, with 70% of sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30, according to the UN. “These numbers represent amazing possibilities but only if the youth are given the necessary foundations and the support they need to realise their true potential,” notes Netshitenzhe.

At the heart of the Vodacom Foundation is a belief that mobile communication technologies can address some of the country's most pressing challenges and this initiative is just one example of the work we are doing to play our part, she outlines.

“Our hope is that these graduates will use the ICT skills they’ve acquired to contribute to the economy by seeking employment and that they will use their learnings to improve their circumstances and the lives of those around them by pursuing further education. Finally, we want these graduates to explore entrepreneurial opportunities so that they can one day provide much-needed jobs to others,” she concludes.

“Without inclusive, equitable and high-quality education, our young people will be left behind and as Vodacom we want to do what we can to ensure this doesn’t happen.”

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