

GIBS Annual CareerExpo reveals ¾ of youth believe that political engagement can be an effective tool to effect change in South Africa

A recent survey by the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) has revealed that South African Youth have fundamental interest in the political state of our country and while they generally have a positive outlook on the future of South Africa, corruption and leadership issues are top of their minds. Unsurprisingly, celebrity news also remains high their agenda.

Over 1 000 learners were recently surveyed at the annual GIBS CareerExpo, held in Johannesburg as part of the GIBS Spirit of Youth Leadership Programme. The initiative is run by the GIBS Centre for Leadership and Dialogue and is made up of top learners in Grade 11 and 12 from a diverse range of township, inner city, former Model C and private schools.

Phyllis Byars, associate director of the GIBS Centre for Leadership and Dialogue said: “The feedback from this survey reveals that the youth of today are generally positive about their careers, current educational prospects and personal safety in South Africa. In fact, over two thirds of learners felt that South Africa held more career prospects for them than other countries – perhaps an indication of the world economic outlook.”

Respondents expressed marginally less optimism about personal safety with as many as half indicating a high level of uncertainty when asked if they feel safe in South Africa. In terms of education, the majority felt they were being adequately prepared for the job market in a globalised world. These views, combined with their habits of how they consume information, provide an illuminating window on how the youth are likely to approach their future in South Africa as adults.

Despite popular perception that this generation is dependent on social media for all information, it comes as a surprise that a combined 76% of respondents say that they access information about what is happening in the country through traditional media streams such as newspapers and TV news. A lower 21% said that they access such information via social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. The results highlight the fact that the majority of respondents rather used their social networks for information about their favourite celebrities.

The survey also revealed that South Africa’s youth are politically acclimatised, with 58% of all those surveyed saying that they proactively access information on politics more than once a week. Responses also highlighted that although they are positive about the country in general, many commented that corrupt leaders are hindering South Africa’s potential to give them a better life in the future.

75% believe that political engagement can be an effective tool to effect change in South Africa and 38% said that they discuss politics with their peers – mostly within the school environment.

