

A NEW DAWN OF HOPE AT ZIPATSO

...as students and teachers get drilled in entrepreneurship skill

A rare opportunity has dawned on both students and teachers at Zipatso Academy, with an entrepreneurship course bringing them under the same roof.

The four-week workshop series, freely offered and facilitated by the founder and Managing Director of Yalea (www.yalea.com), Mr Richard Gabriel, is aimed at inspiring the participants into recognizing entrepreneurship as a career option.

According to Mr Gabriel, who is currently teaching at the institution as a Swiss Government Civilian Servant, the course is geared at equipping the participants with valuable skills covering such areas as creating a business plan, presentation-, selling- and leadership-skills, basics in Human Resources and concepts like fixed- and variable costs and economies of scale, amongst others. In addition, participants will be drilled in financing and start-up strategies.

The first session, held on 3rd May 2014, saw the participants being introduced to basic entrepreneurship skills such as how to assess a business idea and also involved watching motivational clips of established entrepreneurs including those of late Steve Jobs, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and South African serial entrepreneur Elon Musk. The clips made the students aware that even some of the most successful entrepreneurs on the planet struggled at times and that their passion made them stand up after failures and continued fighting for their vision.

Speaking after the session, Meekness Zangazanga, a Form 3 female student, said the course has come at the right time for her saying entrepreneurship has always been her dream.

»I have always wanted to do business of my own. This is a great opportunity for me to be equipped with the necessary skills for realizing my dream. As you know, there are very few women who are successful in business... I want to be part of them,« said a confident Meekness before declaring, »I want to rule men.«

She said the first session has already inspired her to become passionate in what she does, particularly pointing out the motivation from Steve Jobs and Elon Musk.

Sungeni Bowa, a Form 4 student and an ardent admirer of Bill Gates and his ideas, said he decided to participate in the course because he wants to know how to run a business.

»I want to be independent, I don't want to be employed by anyone. Today I have learnt skills in handling different employees, and I expect to learn a lot in the remaining sessions,« he said, before adding that establishing himself in the entrepreneurship field will give him a chance to interact with different people.

On his part, the Head Teacher of the institution, Mr Levi Kalitsiro, hailed the development saying it is fulfilling some of the institution's objectives.

Said he; »One of the institution's objectives is to help students become creative and innovative. This, therefore, is an important development as it presents one of the platforms for achieving that objective.«

He added that the participation of the teachers is a great development for them too as this will give them an opportunity to beef up their earning.

Speaking in an exclusive interview, the facilitator, Mr Gabriel, said he was very pleased with the turn out of the participants. He warned the participants against undermining the importance of education at the expense of entrepreneurship.

»I am not discouraging education. Education is very important. I am only encouraging the students to take entrepreneurship as a career option after completing their studies,« he said. »You need lots of skills to be a successful entrepreneur. Part of those skills can be acquired at schools and universities. Besides, chances that new businesses fail are quite high – it is better to have a backup plan in case you do not succeed as planned,« he added.

Asked on what motivated him to offer the course, Mr Gabriel said he wanted to share the experience that he has gained in running Yalea with the participants. He said he himself was encouraged by a similar workshop to start Yalea in 2004 while still a student at the University of Lausanne. Yalea is an online language education business with offices in Switzerland and Chile and currently has 25 employees.

Mr Gabriel further advised the participants and all prospective entrepreneurs in African countries not to be discouraged with the notion that entrepreneurship requires a lot of capital, saying access to capital is a problem of startup entrepreneurs everywhere. In this regard, Mr Gabriel advised that it is usually a good strategy to start small in order to test your idea and acquire experience and grow from there. Subsistence entrepreneurs, he said, generally have the option to raise funds from microcredit institutions while the more transformative businesses might have a chance to attract business angels or venture capitalists when they can prove that they have a lot of potential. Even internet Crowdfunding platforms could be an option.

Most countries in Africa are still poor and experts suggest that entrepreneurship could play an important role in alleviating the poverty.