

General Education Certificate (GEC) provides students with a hopeful future

Imagine a smaller version of the National Senior Certificate (which is what you get for finishing Grade 12) - a mini-Matric! But instead of allowing you to apply to a university, it lets you apply to a technical college or a school that focuses on teaching things like technical science, agriculture, engineering, aviation, mining, media, maritime studies and or even just sport.



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The General Education Certificate (GEC) is a flagship programme of the Department of Education (DBE) designed to expand the learning pathways and success opportunities of South African Grade 9 learners.

The GEC is intended to formally recognise learners' achievements at the end of the compulsory phase of schooling. Its primary purpose is to facilitate subject choices beyond Grade 9 and articulation between schools and TVET colleges.

More opportunities

The purpose of the GEC is to provide learners with expanded opportunities to display their capabilities on inquiry-based learning, solving real-world problems and designing practical solutions which will better prepare them for further education and training and the world of work.

It is also meant to support the development of learners' "21st-century skills" and strengthen the effective assessment of these skills and learners' knowledge in such a way that can help guide their future study and career pathways.

"While this is not an exit point for learners from the school system, Grade 9 is seen as a point where pupils may shift focus to more technical subjects and trades instead of a singular focus on a college or university education", says James Donald, executive firector of E3DBE.

While the department has reiterated that this is not an exit point for learners from the school system, the certificate will provide better decision-making for learners, especially those who may shift focus to more technical subjects and trades instead of a singular focus on a college or university education.



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Some of the young work-seekers are not well educated and do not possess sufficient skills and previous work experience demanded by employers in the labour market, therefore, GEC is expected to help address South Africa's high youth unemployment levels.

The GEC exists so that learners will be able to make informed decisions that will assist them to choose their next phase of study; have a sense of their levels of preparedness for life after school; and so that their supportive environment (parents, teachers, principals) can further guide, support and teach them based on the combination of results at the end of Grade 9, which will include their aptitude skills/assessment, the integrated common task assessment and the standardised test - and not purely their ability to memorise data for exams.

Through continuous assessment, they will gain a better understanding of these talents and capabilities and at the end will receive a GEC report card that will assist learners in selecting pathways other than just the academic stream.

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