

## **Students And Skills Shortages In BC**

It is back to school time. This week we will take a brief look at skills shortages and their relation to schooling.

A challenge that students face is to understanding why the BC economy is not producing enough skilled workers to satisfy industry demands. Students should understand the exact nature of these shortages and relate them to the courses they are taking.

One reason for this shortage is a mismatch between skills students are taught in the public school system and the ones they need for jobs in the new economy.

With the emerging dependence and development of technology, it is now imperative that students develop more of the skills required to function effectively in a knowledge-based economy. This does not mean that they should focus on acquiring a single set of skills, but rather develop a broad-based technological literacy that develops a person's awareness of the impact of technology, confers an understanding of the scientific principles that underpin various technologies, and provides people with the opportunity to develop an aesthetic appreciation of traditional, industrial and post-industrial design, craft and materials.

All this combined with a blend of what is conventionally termed academic, industrial and fine art education to provide an educational platform that would prepare students for the less structured and more varied economic conditions that await them upon graduation.

Such interdisciplinary skills will be highly valued in the new economy, which incorporates traditional arts and crafts and small-scale production, as well as large-scale production.

Students should therefore be encouraged to combine courses in media arts and music, with, for example, information technology or fabrication. Such a blurring of boundaries will help assist in preparing students for work in every arena of a contemporary workplace.

Another example of this would be to study traditional craft and industrial production such as metalwork, jewellery, mechanics or furniture-making, as well as contemporary knowledge-based production, such as the development of Web sites and computer games, and, for those with advanced IT education, the development of the platforms for these electronic products.

This more integrated education studied through project based curriculum would assist in developing the multiple skills and "literacy's" increasingly necessary for workplace and life success in a post-industrial society.

The focus off this article was towards the shortages in the IT sector, however there are also emerging shortages of labour in some traditional industrial occupations, especially in the number of people working in trades.

There are also many other factors that can come to play in assessing the labour market of a particular industry sector. For example, over the next decade, the economy is facing the two-pronged challenge of satisfying rapid growth in demand for skilled workers and baby boomers approaching early retirement. I encourage students to review the many labour market trends by using the Internet.

Some of the most important websites are:

[www.makingcareersense.org](http://www.makingcareersense.org)

[www.workinfont.net.bc.ca](http://www.workinfont.net.bc.ca)

[www.guidetobceconomy.org](http://www.guidetobceconomy.org)

[www.whatskey.org](http://www.whatskey.org)

By understanding what drives and effects the BC labour market one can better prepare and develop the appropriate skills and expertise to fill those gaps in the workforce.

Many people complain that there are “no jobs” or a “lack of jobs” in the areas that they want to find work. This type of response shows that the person has not developed a clearer picture of the predominant labour market trends in that area. By understanding why this shortage exists, people can better help themselves and others with difficult career decisions.

Have a great school year !!!