

## COMPENDIUM ON CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING PART 70

### **Work is necessary 2 – Everyone has a right to work**

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Despite everyone having the right to work, there are instances where persons, despite having this right, are not allowed to participate in the working environment. The *Compendium* highlights that this requires policy makers, governments and other development planners to put systems in place to ensure that no one group is excluded from this fundamental human right of employment.

“The planning capacity of society, oriented towards the common good and looking to the future, is measured also and above all on the basis of the employment prospects that it is able to offer. The high level of unemployment, the presence of obsolete educational systems and of persistent difficulties in gaining access to professional formation and the job market represent, especially for many young people, a huge obstacle on the road to human and professional fulfilment.

In fact, those who are unemployed or underemployed suffer the profound negative consequences that such a situation creates in a personality and they run the risk of being marginalised within society, of becoming victims of social exclusion (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*).”

There are several groups of people who fall into this category. Young persons have lots of difficulty in getting into the working world. They often lack working experience and in many instances this is used as a mark against them.

This highlights the need for planners to ensure that educational programmes incorporate activities that may simulate experiences that reflect the workplace, as well as activities for young people to engage in that will demonstrate they have the basic skills required to enter into employment.

The *Compendium* reminds us that while this is a key issue for young persons “in general this is the drama that strikes also women, less specialised workers, the persons with disabilities, immigrant, ex-convicts, the illiterate, all those who face greater difficulties in the attempt to find their place in the world of employment.”

In Trinidad and Tobago’s context, I wish to highlight three groups in particular that suffer from exclusion from the labour force. These are the disabled, the ex-convict and the illiterate. Many persons genuinely feel that because someone is visually impaired, or has and physical disability that they are unable to work.

This is not true. Based on progress made through the advocacy of various groups representing the disabled, we have seen companies in Trinidad and Tobago hiring persons with disabilities. We must remember that although someone has some disability, they have the same desires to own property, have a family and contribute to the good of the human family.

Regarding ex-convicts, even after persons have paid for their crimes, society has extreme difficulty accepting them back into the workplace. While the prison system may be far from

perfect, in a number of instances there have been persons who have been reformed – they must be given an opportunity to enjoy the same rights that all of us are legally entitled to.

In instances where the reform of the ex-convict is questionable, the whole issue of planning programmes for their re-integration into society is essential; not only through government and development agencies, but through the work of the Church and other non-governmental organisations.

Those who are illiterate are particularly vulnerable, because (1) they are unable to compete with everyone else to get well-paid jobs and (2) when they are able to secure jobs they may be taken advantage of in the area of their terms and conditions of employment.

Again there is a clear role for others in society to ensure that these persons either become literate and where there is a clear difficulty with acquiring literacy skills that they are able to communicate clearly to ensure that their rights are not trampled upon.

Another important issue, which the *Compendium* recognises is the important role of education and training. “Maintaining employment depends more and more on one’s professional capabilities (*Gaudium et Spes*). Instructional and educational systems must not neglect human or technological formation, which are necessary for gainfully fulfilling one’s responsibilities.

The ever more widespread necessity of changing jobs many times in one’s lifetime makes it imperative that the educational system encourage people to be open to on-going updating and re-training. Young people should be taught to act upon their own initiative, to accept the responsibility of facing with adequate competencies the risks connected with a fluid economic context that is often unpredictable in the way it evolves (*Gaudium et Spes*).

Equally indispensable is the task of offering suitable courses of formation for adults seeking re-training and for the unemployed. More generally, people need concrete forms of support as they journey in the world of work, starting precisely with formational systems, so that it will be less difficult to cope with periods of change, uncertainty and instability.”