

Level: Secondary 4

Learning Period: 1 Hour

Learning Goals: Students will be able to

1. Understand the meaning of human labour and choosing a career as participation in the creation of a better world.
2. Human dignity is innate and therefore all human work is of value.

Big Idea: Every kind of work is important. Participation in building up society gives a stronger sense of belonging and identity.

Core Values: Responsibility, Integrity and Respect

CCE Learning Outcome: Appreciate our national identity, [develop a sense of belonging to Singapore] and demonstrate commitment to the wellbeing of the nation.

SEL Competencies: Self-Awareness and Social Awareness

Materials/Media: Latest unemployment figures, activity sheets, sign boards/placards

Context:

The students sitting in front of you in this class will come from very different points of view on what it means to work. Some may consider any kind of work, manual, clerical, professional or commercial to be highly valued as long as one works honestly and works hard. Some students may have the impression that any manual work is humiliating and should only be done by low-skilled foreign workers. Some may have the idea that making money is what work is all about so if we can make money without working (investing in shares or funds) or if we can make a ton of money by inventing something like a video game or *Facebook* company that is the way to go. What are the attitudes to work in your class? Do we tend to take employment for granted in Singapore where unemployment is generally very low (between 2 to 3%). In Spain and Greece unemployment stands at nearly 10%. In Palestine it is 50%. To have a job, to be paid and be able to sustain your family adequately is a human right but many do not enjoy that basic right. We need to be grateful for work – any work. Where do our students stand with regards to this matter?

Notes for the teacher

Human labour or work is an extremely complex issue which, in this one lesson we can only touch on one limited area without much depth. We would like students **to look forward to working as a way of participating in the building up of the nation**. We would like **to develop in students the desire to work for the good of others and not only for the purpose of person wealth**. We would like **to remind students of the dignity of all ethically acceptable work since human beings do the work and have an innate dignity**. It is important that students have a clear understanding that work is for man and not man for work. The reason we set up companies, run businesses, create jobs and employ people is so that each and every person can have a meaningful life and can reach their full potential.

The profit margin is a necessity but not the reason for the existence of a business. **People are at the centre of our discussion.**

Something to think about [for teachers]:

How do you understand the place of a man or woman in a factory or shop or school? Would you agree that the factory or shop or school exists for him or her and all others like him in that place? Or would you rather say that the person exists to make the company profitable? We said in an earlier lesson that NO HUMAN PERSON CAN BE A MEANS TO AN END, BUT IS AN END IN HIMSELF. What do you think?

“Our Credo “Building People” has been the cornerstone of our success this past decade. We are committed to be good corporate citizen and to building a greener future, not just for this generation, but for the generations to come.”

– Liew Mun Leong, President & CEO, CapitaLand Group, CapitaLand Sustainability Report 2009

LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

I. Tuning – in:

Assumptions about work (**Activity sheet 1**)

Instruction: Do a very quick starter discussion about work. Ask the students this question:

Question 1: What comes to mind when you think about work?

Call on few students to share their understanding of what work means (question #1).

Then, ask the students to answer the question using the activity sheet.

Question 2: What are our everyday assumptions about work?

Invite the students to share their responses with the class.

Pay careful attention to how the students complete the sentences and explain their understanding of the meaning of work. Understanding their perspectives on the topic will help you in conducting your lesson well. A brief highlighting of understanding is all we want at this point. We will explore further the different ways of approaching work in the next part of the lesson.

II. Learning Activity:

Option 1: Why work? (**Activity sheet 2**)

Instruction: Begin the activity with a prompt question -

Will you work after all your studies? Why?

Give the students 1 minute to think about the question. The answer may seem obvious but allow them to give it some thought.

Using the activity sheet, ask the students to review the list of reasons why people work. Ask if they have other reasons not mentioned in the list. Discuss the list of reasons and identify the most

popular reasons for working. Affirm those reasons that are personal, positive and make a contribution to society.

Option 2: The work we do gives us importance and prestige (**Activity sheet 3**)

Instruction: Ask the students to reflect on this prompt question:

Does it matter to you what kind of work you will do or what kind of job you will get? Why?

Let us put a value on a list of jobs to check the prestige that is accorded to these jobs.

Have the students work individually on the list. After they have completed the activity by themselves ask them to work with a small group and see if they have some agreement on the prestige of each occupation.

Option 3: How we view workers and work

Instruction: If you have more active students you may want to have 15 or more placards with an occupation or job on each card which students can choose or you can assign to each.

Ask all 15 students to stand in any order holding up their placards.

Ask a student to arrange the jobs in order of remuneration - which job gets the most pay?

Ask another student to rearrange the students in terms of who makes an important contribution to society.

Ask a third student to arrange the students according to how society values these jobs.

Ask those students carrying the low paid, lowly valued jobs to ask how they felt and what contribution they think they make to society.

What is the purpose of these exercises? We would like students to become aware of the value they place on different types of work. In the next section we would like to try and help them to see why all work is worth doing and doing well. By the same token, all work should be adequately rewarded.

After any one of the options above - DISCUSS and EXPLAIN

Ask students to consider all the people who work in the school – the teachers, the technicians, clerks, gardeners, cleaners, canteen operators, security guards, principal and VPs, supervisor, superintendent, cluster head and so on. Ask them to consider who can be excused from work and what would be the result. The point of this question is to help them realise that the humblest of jobs which are often taken for granted are extremely important to our well-being. The ancillary staffs, like cleaners and gardeners, are essential part of a good school and a good environment for the school. From the top position in the school to the aunty in the canteen, everyone has equal dignity and value as a person. Therefore the work they do is considered meaningful and worthy of respect. Our dignity is the same because we are all human beings but our functions are very different.

Ask students if there are any who have worked part time in shops or restaurants or anywhere and ask them how they felt about the job. Did people treat them badly? Did they have any job satisfaction? What did it teach them about working life? Try to get students to appreciate the simpler, more manual or technical jobs and how hard people have to work in these positions.

III. Inspiration and Deepening: Link the students' learning experience with the following points:

1. Work is for the person and not people for work.
2. All work is of great value because a human person is doing it.
3. Even the simplest of jobs done with love and a positive attitude makes a major contribution to society.
4. The purpose of work is for the person to reach his or her full potential and make a difference in the lives of his or her family, friends, colleagues and fellow human beings.
5. Happiness can be found in honest, meaningful work that is adequate for sustaining a family.
6. Dirty, dangerous, repetitive, noisy and tedious jobs are meant for machines, not humans. If humans need to work under such conditions their lives should be treated as precious and they should be rewarded well.

III. Reflection

Instruction: Lead the students to a more reflective exercise.

1. What is my new insight related to human work? Is it significant for you? Why?
2. What are my family or peer group expectations of me in relation to jobs and work?
3. How do I feel about these expectations?
4. What do I feel drawn to do or is there something I want to make?

IV. Action (Activity sheet 4)

Instruction: Interview someone who is doing the work you think you would like to do. Write into your journal during the week what you find draws you to this particular type of work and how it helps you reach your full potential.

V. Evaluation

Instruction: Follow up the assigned interview activity in the Action component of this lesson. You may ask them these questions:

1. What was the result of the interview and your reflections?
2. What did they teach you about your choice of work or career?
3. Are there any immediate implications?

What are our everyday assumptions about work?

Instruction: Work is something that we deal with every day. Think about some of our everyday assumptions about work, *i.e. to work means to have an income*. Below are unfinished sentences that you need to complete using our common assumptions about work.

1. Work is dignified because _____

2. Manual work is _____

3. The Work I do will _____

4. The People I work for _____

5. The People I employ _____

6. To work means _____

7. What do I feel about working? _____

Activity Sheet 2

Will you work after all your studies? Why?

Instruction: Think about the above question for a moment. The answer may seem obvious but give it some thought: **Will you work after all your studies? Why?**

Below is a list of reasons why people work. Review the list if there are other reasons not mentioned in the list for working. You may expand the list if you have more reasons.

Put a CROSS X in every box that is a reason you would give for working. After you have put in the Xs, discuss with a friend the kinds of reasons you have given. Share your answers to the question:

Will these reasons sustain a happy and peaceful life? Why, why not?

List of reasons why people work

1. To pass the time of day
2. To support a family
3. To put into practice what I have learnt
4. To do what they love doing
5. To develop their talents
6. To develop their personality and identity
7. To answer the call to serve
8. To participate in building up a better world.
9. To sustain a luxurious life-style.
10. To impress family and friends.
11. To have company and friendships
12. To learn new things – skills, knowledge, discipline.
13.
14.
15.

Activity Sheet 3

The work we do gives us importance and prestige

Instruction: In every society different jobs are viewed differently. Let us check what our own thoughts are by ranking the occupations from 1 - 15. 1 is the most prestigious and 15 the least. You can repeat the numbers.

1. _____ Doctor
2. _____ Nurse's Aide
3. _____ Kindergarten teacher
4. _____ Police Officer
5. _____ Novelist (writer)
6. _____ Psychologist
7. _____ University Professor
8. _____ Lawyer
9. _____ Banker
10. _____ Clerk / Receptionist
11. _____ Salesgirl
12. _____ Check out clerk at supermarket
13. _____ Member of Parliament
14. _____ Construction Worker
15. _____ Foreign Domestic Worker

After you have completed the ranking, discuss with two or three others, why you put those numbers and what contribution these people make to society.

Activity Sheet 4

Instruction: Interview someone who is doing the work that you think you would like to do. Use the table below as your guide. Be prepared to share your work with the class next session.

Type of Work	What attracts	How will it fulfil my potential	What contribution to the nation or society?

Look at your answers. Are you satisfied with your choice? What is good and what could be improved?