

Figure 10: Tasks required for work



Davis argues that demand for uniquely human work will actually accelerate to the point that it will be a challenge to fill the demand for those jobs. Consider one such advanced skill that South Africans have in abundance: caring for others. Now go straight to our chapter on longevity (**Part 2**) and ask whether we aren't missing a trick here.

Source: Vanguard Investment Strategy Group

## How longevity will disrupt skills development initiatives as they currently exist

Now let's add a further dimension to the whole issue of skills development. This isn't as much about what skills to develop as it is about how our skills will need to evolve over time to address the increasing reality of a longer working life.

As academics Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott have pointed out in their book, *The 100-Year Life*, thanks to significant improvements in medicine and our general lifestyles, many of us will still be highly productive long after a nominal retirement date. This challenges the whole current convention of the three-tiered life: first you learn, then you earn, then you learn to live off of what you have earned. To them, our natural evolution as workers and professionals will be to a multistage life<sup>12</sup>.

Consider the implications:

- Re-creation will be more important than recreation. There will no longer be two big transitions in life: into the workplace and then out. Instead, there will be many transitions throughout our life. That means that two of the most critical skills for us to embrace will be adaptability and flexibility: the need for workers to keep reinventing themselves.
- Preparing ourselves for one career will no longer be adequate. We will need 'to learn how to learn'. That means that, by necessity, skills development will be an ongoing process.

- Maintaining our competitive edge in the workplace will no longer be about brushing up on existing skills. Instead, it will be about developing a whole new set of skills.
- With more time to flesh out our capabilities, career trajectories will be less linear and more circumspect, with any number of sequencing possibilities. We may enter certain careers much later, leave careers at more arbitrary points and potentially re-enter them much later on in life.
- We will become more age-agnostic in our skills development, organisational structures and our social interactions. Effectively, we will be 'younger for longer' as retaining our adolescent zest allows us to be more flexible, adaptable and resilient.
- The nature of our partnerships and relationships will change and, with the fall of historical age barriers within these relationships, family structures will change, too. As Grafton and Scott argue, we are likely to see an even more dramatic emergence of four generations within a family living at the same time<sup>13</sup>.

South Africa will have to urgently respond to these disruptions and develop skills appropriately.

But perhaps the best news we have seen on this front relates to the way the world of ongoing skills development is being totally reconceptualised. In **Part 5: Chapter 4**, we describe an exciting concept that we think finally addresses the issue of how to keep employees engaged with their ongoing skills development, irrespective of their current educational level.

**Figure 11: Options for employees and employers in the new world of work**

