

An exploration of Work-Integrated Learning for a professional public service. The co-creation of the public servant of the future.

Inaugural Lecture : Abstract

August 2024

By

Enaleen Draai
Department of Public Management and Leadership
Faculty of Humanities
Nelson Mandela University

ABSTRACT

The role of universities in society is to pursue knowledge development and knowledge transfer to the current and future generations by facilitating teaching and learning, critical thinking, research and creating social awareness of the challenges encountered by society (Duma, 2012; Archer, 2017). Knowledge development and transfer include cognitive development, competence, skill, and expertise that seeks and supports a relationship for socio-economic development between universities, business and government to address existing and future social challenges. The purpose of universities is also social mobility and change for individuals and society. Leading up to and upon obtaining higher education qualifications, graduates thus expect to contribute meaningfully to the economy and governance to facilitate holistic societal change (Alemu 2018).

Many graduates expect to contribute meaningfully to social change for self-actualisation and sustainability of governance in the current and future milieu. Secondly, this expectation is also fostered by the financial investment made by the government in awarding financial aid and bursaries to students. Numerous challenges, however, temper graduate employability in South Africa. Unemployment amongst graduates is high while at the same time, overtures of scarce and critical skills, the strategic management thereof, administrative and managerial incompetence, long-term vacancies and low service quality are cited as some of the challenges encountered particular to the public service. On the other hand, university graduates find entering the labour market difficult if they do not have organisational and job experience and exposure, which can be offset by experiential training. Graduate employability has become a topical and contested theme. This has led to questions about the relevance of the curriculum and the role of universities as society changes (Jonck 2017: 64; Van Jaarsveldt 2018:43).

Experiential training seeks to prepare impending and new graduates for the job market by establishing a link between theory and practice. This paper explores experiential training in the context of public administration and management. The discussion is situated in the context of the experiential learning theory (Kolb and Kolb, 2017). Critical analysis of the advantages accrued to prospective job seekers and institutions is pursued by expounding on skill enhancement and competence for a professional public service. Furthermore, the discussion explores the relevance of experiential training in fostering intergenerational relations between prospective public officials and career public officials. The assumption is that experiential training creates an organisational learning opportunity to revitalise the public service and co-

produce a new organisational culture through sharing new ideas gained from intergenerational engagement (Kahn 2016:741).

Reference list.

Archer, S (2017). The function of a university in South Africa: Part 1. *South African Journal of Science*, 113(5/6), 6. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2017/a0190>

Alemu S.K 2018. The meaning, idea and history of university/higher education in Africa: a brief literature review. *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education* 4,(3) 210-227.

Duma, M, 2012. The university as an agent of change. http://www.usaf.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/HESA-Insight-No-2_April-2012.pdf (Accessed April 2022).

Jonck, P 2017. Graduate employability skills within the public service: A South African case. *The independent journal of teaching and learning*. 12 (2). 64–77.

Kahn SB & Louw V 2016. Maximising generational capacity for an effective South African Public service. *Journal of Public Administration* 51(4), 741-757.

Van Jaarsveldt LC, 2018. Knowledge and skills required by servants in a fast-changing world of work. *Administratio Publica* 26(2)43-64.