

https://dspace.org/

Developing employability: an evaluation of the World of Work Training and Internship Programmes at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Emanuel, Lesley

2012-01-10
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/10946

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Developing employability: an evaluation of the World of Work Training and Internship Programmes at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

by LESLEY EMANUEL

ABSTRACT

Human Sciences' training is consistently criticized for a lack of application to the world of work. Industry is skeptical about the value of human science training in terms of direct economic or political benefit and the result is often unemployment, or precarious career prospects for Humanities and Social Sciences students. The case is worse for those Humanities and Social Science students who will graduate from academic programmes that are not specifically oriented to meet the needs of an industry or profession.

The World of Work Training and Internship Programmes at the Graduate School (now the Graduate Centre) at the University of the Witwatersrand aimed to address this problem through a non-academic intervention. Although the integration of internships into academic programmes is often positioned in the available literature as the ideal in order to optimize learning, the World of Work Programmes were unique in that they were designed as an "add-on" intervention to address the development of Humanities students' employability, *after* completion of their postgraduate degrees. Literature on employability does not does address employability or the employability skills development of those who do not have a professional outcome 'built in' to their academic learning process, let alone the needs and challenges of *postgraduate* Humanities and Social Science students in particular.

The World of Work Programmes consisted of two components. The duration of the Training Programme, which took place at the University, was approximately one month. Thereafter, internships (three months) were arranged for participants at various relevant organisations. Interns were closely monitored and mentored by World of Work staff and by a representative from the host organisation. The World of Work Training and Internship Programmes started in 2001 and the last programmes occurred in 2008.

The purpose of this doctoral research is to evaluate the World of Work Training and Internship Programmes and their contribution to the development of employability.

The evaluation is focused on two key years of the programmes, 2005 and 2006. It includes consideration of the challenges postgraduate Humanities students encounter as they make the transition from academia to the workplace, and how the World of Work Programmes help them manage any difficulties they may have. It also investigates pedagogical approaches for increasing these students' employability, and how the postgraduate Humanities student's transition into an organisation impacts on his/her employability development.

One of the key findings from the World of Work Programmes' evaluation was that the multiple roles of mentorship are crucial for students' successful transitions into workplaces. The unique partnership in the World of Work Programmes' of the University-based mentor with a workplace supervisor proved to be a compelling subject for further exploration in the final chapter.

In 2005, the practise of weblogging was introduced into the World of Work Programmes' curriculum. There were various aims motivating the introduction of this learning tool, including facilitating learning through reflection, while at the same time improving awareness of, and attitudes towards Humanities and Social Science postgraduate students. We hoped, in this way, to market the potential of Humanities students and their relevance in the workplace. Findings related to these objectives, and also unexpected results from this e-learning project such as the development of a community of practice and how the weblogs provided a sense of Humanities students "in action", has prompted its inclusion in the final chapter as a significant contribution – especially since there is no literature available on the capacity of weblogs to assist with the development and demonstration of employability specifically.

An evaluation of any possible contributions to employability development as a result of such innovations in the World of Work Programmes may be useful for the pedagogical and curricular design of similar programmes.