

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to examine the transitioning experiences of University students who have exited work-integrated learning programmes in South Africa. The study is underpinned by the concept of pathways from higher education to work. The study adopted the DOTS framework which is an acronym for **D**ecision learning, **O**pportunity awareness, **T**ransition learning, and **S**elf-awareness, in the literature to help surface what enables or inhibits employability of WIL programme graduates. The study focused on one industry SETA – the BANKSETA – using a population of participants who were recipients of bursaries in 2015/6 period. These graduates are expected to enrol in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) programmes to enhance their practical skills and knowledge in the industry. The study sampled 257 respondents out of a population of 1 050 BANKSETA bursary recipients. The majority of respondents in this study were female.

The study found that the respondents' expectations of the WIL programme were consistent with those of BANKSETA and of existing literature. In addition, the WIL programme met the respondents' expectations resulting in two out of every three respondents successfully entering the labour market after the programme. Transitioning from university to the labour market was enhanced by the development of the respondents' pervasive and practical skills and knowledge required by the industry.

The study also highlights the importance of the structure and implementation of the WIL programme including intended learning outcomes, mentorship, integration of theory and practice, and supervision. The study recommends the development of a framework for hosts of WIL programmes in order to ensure graduates' experience is enhanced and consistent throughout the industry. Finally, graduates should be encouraged to enrol in the WIL programmes to enhance their employability in the industry.

KEYWORDS: *Work-integrated learning; Universities of Technology; Transitioning pathways; Graduates.*