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THE SKILLS FACTOR AS A PREDICTOR OF GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Samson Nambei Asoba, Department of Public Management and Administration, Walter Sisulu University
Nteboheng Patricia Mefi, Department of Public Management and Administration, Walter Sisulu University
Nancy Fanyana, Independent researcher

ABSTRACT

The study explored skills as a factor in graduate employability in South Africa. In formulating the focus of the study it was taken that South Africa suffers from high unemployment. It was found in this study that factors that contribute to graduate employability were mainly the scarce skills and networking skills of graduates. There was also evidence of bad labour market practices and corruption in the market such as nepotism which was affecting graduate absorption into the labour market. The study found that scarce skills are industry specific despite there being such general skills as communication and other social competencies. The study provided evidence that scarce skills are usually industry-driven and comprise specialized and context-specific technologies and knowledge domains. It was observed that scarce skills often require experience and university education alone is inadequate, hence there is a need for post-university further education that is specifically directed at the acquisition of scarce skills. While graduate employability is largely dependent on scarce skills, it was found that recruitment and employment processes face problems related to unfair labour practices and a high degree of subjectivity that affects employment. Often employers do not employ based on skills but use other criteria. There was evidence that employment is now also being influenced by factors such as networking and relationships among graduates and employers. Based on these results, Universities should foster the development of scarce skills for the employability of graduates.

Keywords: Skills, graduate, employability.