

Narratives of senior students' needs in preparation for employment

Becoming a graduate is not as straightforward as it seems. This study focuses on what we can learn from senior students' narratives about their needs in preparation for employment. Although the graduate unemployment rate is not as concerning as the overall unemployment rate in South Africa, graduate unemployment is not conducive to future leadership and development in the country. Research shows that graduates feel unprepared to enter the job market and the rapidly changing world of work requires competent graduates with an expanded skill set. There are different approaches to how employability competencies can be developed. However, students' 'voices' regarding preparation for employment do not feature prominently. This study aimed to address the apparent lack of research regarding students' needs and voices in preparation for employment, becoming employable and being employed. By interviewing nine postgraduate students and analysing the data through the listening guide method, their needs in terms of personal and social resources were evident. It also became clear that preparing for employment is an individualised process of developing the ability to become employable and be employed. Furthermore, the positioning of the student's needs in terms of the resources required to become employed suggested whether or not there will be the formation of a successful professional identity. The present study indicates that student confidence plays an important part in fostering a better understanding of students' preparation for employment. This study presents a professional identity model as a method to guide students in transitioning into employment.

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