



## CLASSROOM DELIVERY FOR EMPLOYABILITY AT TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: A STUDY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS IN BOTSWANA

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### Abstract

The research investigates how classroom delivery can enhance employability of tertiary institutions graduates. A number of industry captains were interviewed on the employability of tertiary education graduates and the majority raised concern on the 'missing skills' which make it difficult to rate tertiary education graduates as employable. These missing skills includes among others, communication skills, interpersonal skills, business and customer awareness, problem solving abilities, innovativeness, practical knowledge transfer and positive attitude. The curriculum development process of most tertiary institutions was found to be in line with the industry expectations. The content and depth of the curriculum are at par with the industry. Having designed a curriculum with employability in mind, the question is what is then lacking to enhance the development of skills for employability. The research findings concluded that a well-crafted curriculum, suitable learning environment and suitable assessments, if not supported by an effective teaching or class delivery method would not achieve the goals of employability and thus the need to ensure that, tutors though professional in their areas, are trained and equipped with the skills to teach employability.

What was also found interesting are the challenges faced by tutors when using teaching methods that would facilitate the development of employability skills? These challenges are; the pressure to develop subject related skills, course content depth and breadth coverage as expected by sometimes the accrediting bodies and the rewarding system which focuses on the percentage of students who pass the subject related content. This forces the tutor to concentrate more on subject related skills than the employability skills.

### Introduction

The paper focuses on how classroom delivery technique at tertiary education can help the development of employability skills of tertiary education graduates in Botswana. Yorke, 2006 in Ann.P (n.d) defines employability as skills, understanding and personal attributes that make higher education graduates to gain employment and to be successful in their chosen occupation which benefits workforce, society and the economy at large.

The research explores ways in which classroom delivery can promote employability of Botswana tertiary education institutions graduates both in the local and international markets. Class room delivery could be key element in enhancing employability backed by other factors such as curriculum design, assessments and stakeholder consultation and partnership with other tertiary institutions especially international benchmarking and consultation.

### Background to the Study

Mounting pressure in the era of slow economy high employment rate and high number of tertiary institutions graduates in the streets, institutions like government through the Tertiary Education Council (TEC) are putting pressure on institutions of higher education on the employability of their graduates. This has resulted in most tertiary education institutions to partners with the industry in curriculum design and review.

Employability of higher education graduates has become a necessity for the survival of institutions of higher education in Botswana. Higher education institutions should aim to produce graduate which when exposed to the industry is able to produce the expected product quality.

Most institutions of higher education have curriculum designed with the extensive help of the industry which imply that the content meet the industry requirement, but the challenge still remains; the employability of the students who would have gone through the curriculum which is designed and reviewed with the help of the relevant industry experts. The question could lie on the mode of delivery with specific reference to classroom delivery. Again this could be because of the failure to understand employability. Most people interpret employability as getting employment but it is defined by Yorke M (2002) as the possession of skills such as independent work, people skills, and problem solving skills, knowledge, personal characteristics that enhance effective and efficient ways of delivering the task at hand. These skills are required over and above the specific subject skills.

Most institutions of higher learning do not pay much attention on whether the delivery mode used by the tutor enhances the development of employability skills. This is because most of the times those who evaluate the teaching technique used by the tutor are also not equipped to be able to advise and direct the tutor on the delivery mode that can enhance the development of such



skills (Ann.P n.d). QAA UK (n.d) ascertains that employability can be referred to as ‘missing skills’ or higher order skills.

## Problem statement

Most employed tertiary education graduates fail to display the skills that are required by the industry. Though acknowledging the input by higher education institutions, graduate recruiters find most graduates falling short of skills required for employment despite very good grades as reflected on the graduate’s academic transcripts. The graduate recruiters also acknowledged the relevance of the curriculum content as some participate in curriculum development. The major question lies on the way the curriculum is delivered with reference to face to face delivery methods.

The focus is mainly on mass production and economies of scale which has resulted in tertiary institutions failing to put emphasis on delivery methods that promote employability. Lecture method is widely used in tertiary institutions for it is very economic in terms of resources (Financial and human resources).

## Objectives and significance of the study

Not much has been researched on classroom delivery and employability in Botswana. Most of the research is concentrating on curriculum design and assessment as means of enhancing employability. The curriculum does not pay any attention on culture and self-theories which could be addressed by the delivery mode. The study seeks to bridge the gap between classroom delivery methodology and employability. Thus the objectives are;

- Assess the classroom delivery techniques at higher education and employability
- Identify the challenges faced by tutors as they try to use delivery methods that enhances employability and
- Come up with the recommendations that may alleviate the problem of employability

The knowledge and appreciation of delivery methods for employability would address the challenges faced by the graduate employers and would also improve the relevance of tertiary institution in Botswana both locally and internationally.

## Study hypothesis

Having gone through literature on employability, tools like assessment and curriculum enhance the learning for subject knowledge and skills. The missing skills which are crucial for employability are not addressed. These skills cannot be acquired overnight but they need to be nurtured over time and thus the need for tutors to devise the class delivery that promotes the development of such skill. Such delivery methods include the methods that encourage cooperation rather than competition example group learning as a class delivery mode. Thus the delivery method is key to the development of employability skills.

## Definition of terms

- Employability: It is not employment but skills that make the higher education to be employable such as confidence levels, people skill, valuing of customers and business, knowledge transfer (Race P 2007).
- Good delivery: It is a teaching method that results in most students to use their cognitive process needed to learn the subject content and at the same time develop the skills for employability.
- Tutor: Lecturer
- Delivery Method: Classroom or face to face delivery

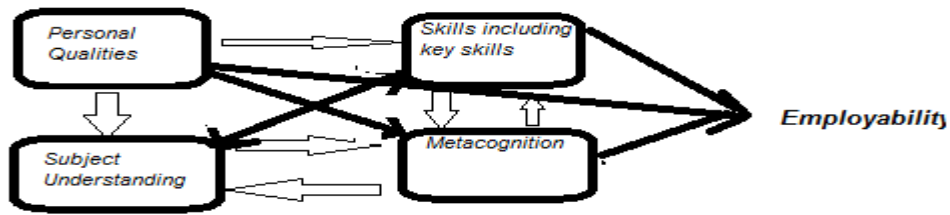
## Scope of the study

The research is focused on the industry captains for they are the recruiters of the tertiary education graduates. They are also the ones who are aware of the skills required for employability. The other study focus is tutors of tertiary education institutions. This is because these are the individuals who are responsible for class room delivery of the content, or curriculum. The curriculum was evaluated also against the time allocated for delivery and industry relevance. Students at tertiary institution also constitute the study focus as they are contributing towards their own learning as explained by self-theories.

## Literature review

Indicates that traditionally, institutions of higher education have been viewing subject understanding as their only mandate. This understanding has resulted in the creation of the gap between what is offered by higher education institutions and industry expectations.

Employability is a function of many factors which are interlinked and interdependent as shown on the figure 1 below



Source: Yorke Mantz (2002)

Fig 1

Key skills enhance the understanding of the subject content. These key skills are numeracy skill, literacy skills, information and technology skills as well as communication skills. These skills are incorporated into the curriculum of most tertiary institutions with other institutions such as the vocational training centers having to establish standalone departments. The key skills are not employability skills as employability skills are more than numeracy, literacy, IT and communication skills.

Self-theories have not been given much attention as the acquisition of employability might be hindered by these self-theories that are the student perception and belief about themselves. These beliefs are characterized to into two by (Brenda L, 2004). He states that the student’s beliefs about themselves can be malleable or fixed. Students with malleable beliefs find it very easy to acquire and learn new skills as they believe that they flexible enough to acquire any skills. Students with fixed beliefs about themselves find it difficult to acquire new skills especially if they once failed to acquire such skills before.

Students with fixed beliefs can easily get discouraged by failures and this is now the duty of the teacher to intervene with an appropriate teaching method that would encourage the students to acquire the employability skills.

Intelligence has been measured by the test mark scored by the individual, yet intelligence is multidimensional variable which include elements like flexibility and adaptability. It is this complex and multidimensional intelligence that has to be unlocked by the tutor through classroom delivery that would enhance the learning of employability skills (Race. P 2007)

Most tertiary institutions measure intelligence using the test score which hinders the reliable way of assessing whether the students acquire the skills necessary for employability. The intelligence measurement tool has constrained most tutors to go no further than the subject content thus inhibiting the development of ‘missing skills’.

Tutors require teaching strategies that encourage students to move towards malleability. Yorke M (2002) observed that students with fixed beliefs are likely to do well in tests but they tend to miss the goal of employability skills. Put in the industry, these graduates find it difficult to adjust and learn more in the face of various challenges in the employment industry. With malleable students challenges are an opportunity to learn and they do not easily learn helplessness (Brenda L 2004). Learners should view and experience the delivery method that has the real value from both the learners and the industry’ view. Real value learning is the learning that yields the skills most sought by the industry which are

- personal qualities such as emotional intelligence, stress tolerance,
- core skills that is the subject skills,
- process skills such as problem solving skills, decision making skills, independent work and
- Innovation which is viewed as one of the most difficulty skill to find among the tertiary institution graduates (Brenda L 2004).

The ability to transform theory into reality remains a challenge for most tertiary education graduates. Those graduates that are taken through personal development courses as part of their curriculum has a tendency of taking such courses as theoretical just as they view their subject content material (QAA,UK,n.d). This means that there is a renewed challenge for tertiary institutions to find other ways of enhancing the development of employability skills which is classroom delivery techniques. These techniques should give emphasis on the development of critical, reflective abilities which empowers the learners with the most sought skills by the industry, (Harvey, 2005 in QAA, UK, n.d). This means that there is a linkage between classroom delivery and employability as shown in fig 2 below.

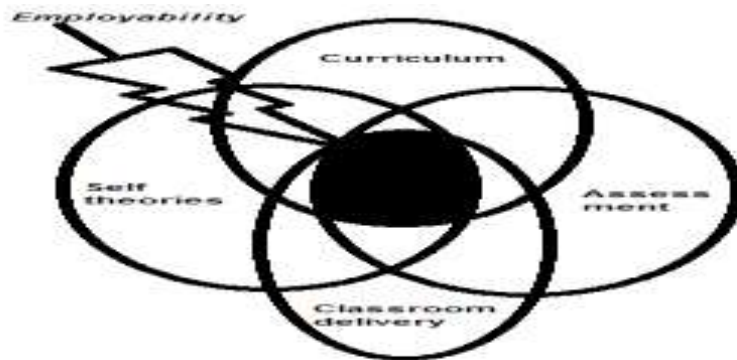


Fig2

In order for tutors to contribute to employability through classroom delivery, there is need to identify critical employability skills required of students. Once the skills are identified, then the tutor is to use reflective delivery method. This method requires the tutor to constantly reflect on the contribution to employability of the classroom delivery method used. This implies that the employability can be easily embraced if incorporated in all the elements of teaching, learning and assessment which are class room delivery, curriculum design, assessment and self-theories.

Delivery methods such as group learning are viewed by many education writers as one of the effective ways of enhancing the development of employability skills. The development of skills such as people skills would help avoid the production of 'half-baked graduates'. Group learning would help the students to sharpen key skills that are crucial for their employability as learning at higher education is traditionally known to be good in developing subject-specific skills Race (2007), thus group learning would help bridging the gap between curriculum and the most sort skills by the industry.

The idea of group learning if adopted well has enormous advantages. Kate etal (2009) indicated that group learning stimulate individual students and increases the levels of student interaction. As students interact, there is an invisible hand which pushes the student to develop the 'missing skills'. Students tend to develop means of working in a group and means to fit in the group thereby learning team and people skills. Morgen etal (2005) explained group learning as one of most potentially rewarding teaching and learning method with benefits that are cognitive and effective in nature.

Venture matrix as a delivery method can be utilized by tertiary institutions. This delivery method helps the learners to have hands on experience as they are exposed to an opportunity to apply the acquired theory. Tutor guided role play can be as part of classroom delivery. This would help the students to have a feel of the industry.

## Methodology

The research concentrated on captains of the industry in Francistown, Botswana. The questionnaire was administered which had both closed and open ended questions. The questionnaire was meant to capture the missing skills as viewed by the industry. The database of companies was collected from BOCCIM (Botswana Chamber of Commerce Industry and Manpower Development). The curricula and a sample of assessments for Business Management, Accounting and Information Technology of tertiary institutions based in Francistown (Botho University, University of Botswana Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) and Baisago University College were analyzed to see if they meet the content expectations of the industry.

Information was also gathered from the lecturers at these institutions as they are the ones responsible for the classroom delivery of these institutions' curricula. The questionnaire was also administered with the intention of capturing the best ways of classroom delivery that might enhance the development of employability skills and also the possible challenges were gathered through the same questionnaire. Information on teaching methods was also gathered through a questionnaire which was administered to lecturers.

The research also interacted with student to ascertain their awareness of the need to develop the employability skills. Data analysis was done using simple statistical tools such as tables, and graphs.

## Result analysis

After data collection, the results were analysed as per responses from the different target elements.



### Curriculum

After analyzing the curricula of various institutions for various subject, it was generally found that the curricula content are in line with the current trend in the industry. This means that the designing of the curricula take into consideration employability as reflected by content depth and breadth. However, there are still some grey area where the research reveals that the curricula is rallying behind the development in the industry this mismatch was found with some curricula such as accounting (using old accounting standards), information and technology ( not teaching the latest version ) .

### Student awareness of the need to develop employability skills.

The research findings revealed that the students are not aware of such skills. They indicated that their main focus is to pass the subject content. Upon asked about their life after passing the subject content 90% of the students professed ignorance of the need to enhance the skills outside the subject content. This is because; the programmes that are meant to enhance the acquisition of such skills are viewed as time wasters by the students. This is so especially with the programmes that not examinable or any content deemed not to be covered by the curriculum

### Employability skills from the industry perspective

The industry captains expressed contentment about the subject content. However the research findings indicated that most tertiary institutions graduates lack the employability skills. The skills most highlighted by the industry are as follows;

- Customer consciousness
- Positive attitude
- Innovativeness
- Self confidence
- Context application
- Communication (Both oral and written)
- Problem solving
- People Skills
- Subject knowledge

The degree at which the tertiary education graduates display the employability skills is shown on the diagram below fig 3. From the diagram below it can be concluded that most tertiary institutions graduates have the knowledge of the subject content, but this is not a key element in employability. The most crucial skills are falling short with customer consciousness only scoring 2%.

Skills displayed by tertiary education institution graduates

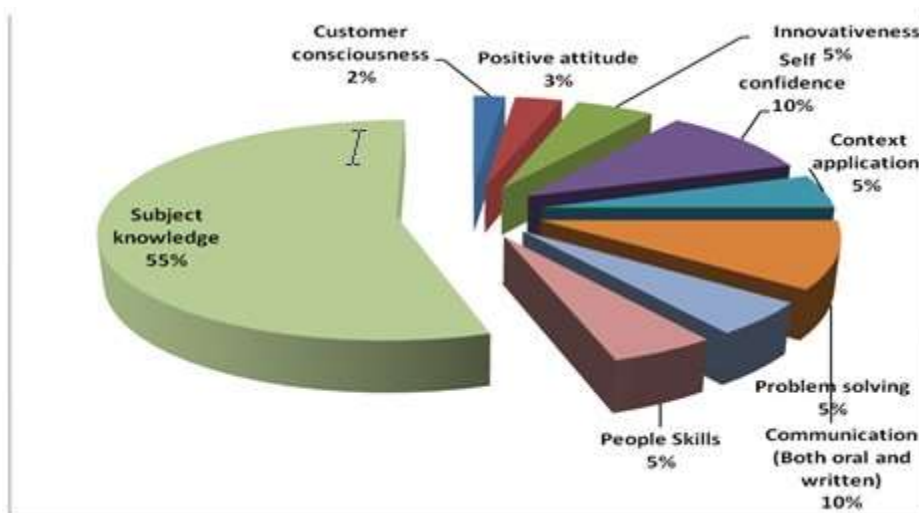


Fig 3

### Classroom delivery methodology

A number of tutors were found to be unaware of the class room delivery methodologies that can enhance the development of employability skills. 53% tutors professed ignorance of the employability concept.



Those who are not familiar of employability concept indicated that they would require to be familiarized with the concept which would help on the selection of the delivery methodology.

Tutors not aware of teaching methodologies that can enhance employability indicated that they would use the methodologies given that they are trained on such methodologies.

The findings revealed that those who are aware of classroom delivery methodologies that enhance employability are finding it difficult to use these methods because of various challenges. These challenges include among others;

- The time allocated to cover the curriculum content does not give the tutor an opportunity to explore other methods other than tutorial, lecturing and lectorial methods
- The current tutor rewarding system by most tertiary institution is based on the number of students who passed the subject content thus tutors are forced to focus on subject content more than on employability.
- The availability of resources is challenge with most institutions in Botswana as some delivery methods would require more resources such as the venture matrix method.

## Conclusion

Employability was found to be a complex subject in higher education as it is affected by many factors and depending on context. Any attempt to evaluate and teach employability at any institution level might be a mammoth task which might yield very little results. This is because there are many players in the employability puzzle which include accrediting bodies, content developers, tutors, industry, students and the organization.

## Recommendations

For employability to be achieved, there is need for all the stakeholders to work together, the industry be willing to partner with institutions in delivery, content developers to take into consideration employability, tutors be equipped with the skills for employability, institutions avail resources required to support the development of employability skills and accrediting bodies require to be flexible and adjust the standards to suits the changing demands of the industry.

Those responsible for student orientation should emphasized on the need for students to develop such skills. The tutors can devise strategies such as the visits by industry captains so that they can address students on the skills that are most sought by the industry over and above the subject related skills. The tutors through classroom deliver can assist the learners in making connections with their intentions and their learning. Employability can be enhanced through classroom delivery by giving the students the activities that articulate learning, raise self-confidence, self-esteem, aspiration, communication skills, problems solving skills and any higher levels skills.

Further research can be done on how the stakeholder can partner in delivery to enhance the development of employability skills.

## Acknowledgment

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