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Employability and Curriculum Responsiveness in Post-School Education and Training

LMIP Policy Roundtable

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The challenge

How do we address skills gaps in South Africa to improve alignment between what the E&T system produces, and the needs of the public and private sectors?

How can industry and education organisations work together to produce relevant graduates at all skills levels?

We can try to create projections for skills needed in specific sectors and occupations...

But these projections have limited policy utility without also having an understanding of how organisations *interact* to match the supply of and demand for skills...

- 7 case studies
 - Sugar sector (industry)
 - Forestry sector (2 universities)
 - Automotive (2 x Artisan and NCV)
 - UOT Engineering
- Some integrating dimensions
- Data
 - Employer, student and lecturer interviews
 - Transect walks through education sites
 - Document analysis

Employability

Expanded definition

- the ability of a person to find employment,
- but also to find suitable employment,
- to retain that employment,
- to have opportunities to progress within a career path or to move into other pathways,
- and ultimately to be fulfilled through the work that they do.

What is the problem?

- Much ado about what exactly?
 - International problem viz. Oxford graduates can't spell and have poor general knowledge
 - Higher Education raises the same issues
 - Wits university decision to scrap 4 year LLB
 - Inclusion of core humanities modules in Engineering
 - Inability to write
 - Basic numeracy
 - Lack of general knowledge – “I wish they'd watched more of the history channel”
 - Lack of social/ethical skills

Employability

- Focuses on the 'product' of the system
- Individualised
- Based on needs of employers
- Often becomes a check list of attributes





Senior Forester: Mechanised Harvesting <http://www.forestry.co.za/senior-forester-harvesting/>

Qualifications & Experience

National Diploma in Forestry with focus on Harvesting

Relevant Higher Diploma / Degree in Forestry with a focus on harvesting will be an advantage

At least 5 years' experience in Harvesting (including marking and thinning)

Driver's license (code B)

Key Competencies

Persuasion and influence

Communication & negotiation

Business acumen

Systems, analytical & critical thinking

Logical and detail focus

Perseverance

Self-Driven and motivated

Planning

Problem solving

Innovative and change oriented



Curriculum Responsiveness

- Curriculum
 - Totality of student experiences in an educational process (Kelly 2009)
 - Opens up questions about the intended, enacted, overt, covert (hidden), unintended versions of the curriculum
 - Deals with objectives, knowledge, assessment/evaluation, pedagogy
- Responsiveness
 - A reaction to and action on something

Curriculum (un)Responsiveness

- Dominant discourse in the public domain and in much of the literature focuses on:
 - The inappropriate graduate attributes that employers find
 - The lack of ‘soft’ skills, often referred to as employability skills
 - Inappropriate or dated content
 - Entirely wrong skills being taught
- But what should the curriculum be responding to?

Response Factors

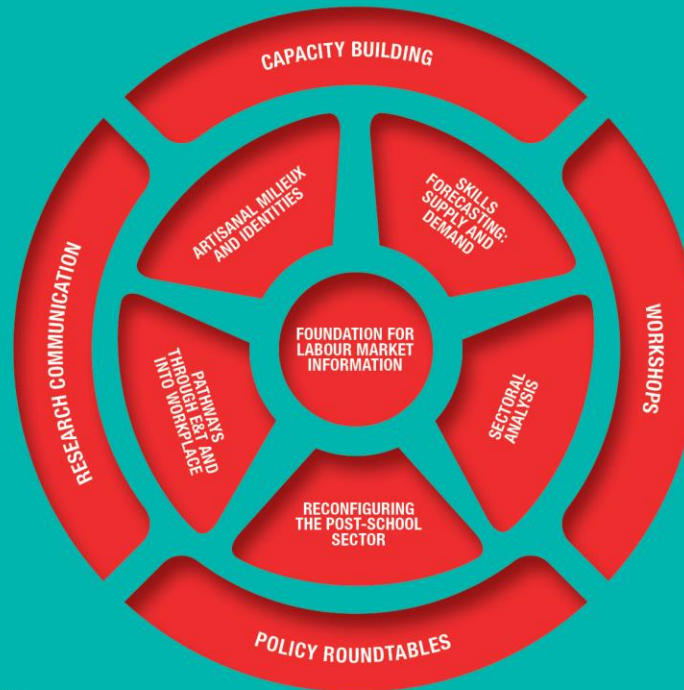
- Employer
- Student needs
- Policy
- Society (including the non-human parts)
- Institutional capacity

Moll (2004) has a different configuration

- Economic
- Cultural
- Disciplinary
- Learning

Curriculum responsiveness is a concept that insists that we study all of its apparent dimensions – the economic, the socio-cultural, the programmatic, the individual – simultaneously. There can be no doubt that the various realities they refer to articulate with each other and constitute affordances and constraints for each other (Moll 2004 p. 8).

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