

# Employability and responsiveness in post-school education and training institutions

A comparative literature review

Adrienne Watson

connecting capabilities individuals & institutions connecting capabilities individuals & institutions

connecting capabilities individuals & institutions connecting capabilities individuals & institutions



LABOUR MARKET  
INTELLIGENCE PARTNERSHIP

Published in 2014 by the Labour Market Intelligence Partnership (LMIP),  
a research consortium led by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in partnership  
with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and funded by the National Skills Fund.  
[www.lmip.org.za](http://www.lmip.org.za)

Designed, typeset and proofread by COMPRESS.dsl  
[www.compressdsl.com](http://www.compressdsl.com)

**Disclaimer**

The HSRC-led consortium has released these working papers to inform debate, encourage different thinking about social problems and stimulate the development of novel policies. These working papers do not themselves represent policy advice. The ideas, opinions, conclusions or policy recommendations expressed in these working papers are strictly those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent, and should not be reported as, those of the HSRC-led consortium or the DHET. The HSRC-led consortium and its funders take no responsibility for any content or syntax errors, omissions in, or for the accuracy of, the information contained in these working papers.

# CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
REVIEWING THE RHETORIC	3
EMPLOYABILITY: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW	5
Different gazes: Some critiques of employability	5
Blurred vision: An exemplar of employability as a conflicted discourse	8
Critiquing the self-development paradigm	9
Employees as critical agents	11
Systemic barriers to employability	13
Ineffective self-efficacy	14
MOVING TOWARDS AN EXPANDED VIEW OF EMPLOYABILITY AND CURRICULUM RESPONSIVENESS	15
RESPONSES OF THE POST-SCHOOL E&T SECTOR TO EMPLOYABILITY	17
A contextual frame	17
FET colleges	20
Universities	22
CONCLUSION	24
ENDNOTES	26
REFERENCES	27

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. McQuaid and Lindsay's Interactive Employability Framework	27
Figure 2. Factors within the Interactive Employability Framework	27

## NOTE

The author wishes to thank Volker Wedekind and Glenda Kruss for their invaluable insights and critique.

# INTRODUCTION

This discussion began as part of a single project, which sought to review the literature on employability and curriculum responsiveness in the post-school sector, understood in this paper as the entire system of education and training institutions available to people who have left school (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET] 2013).

However, what became evident is that the conventional understanding of employability, underpinned by development theories in general, and human capital theory in particular (Schultz 1961), is problematic when viewed from the perspective of education as an agent of social transformation. Much of the literature obscures any sense of individual subjectivity, agency, choice and human flourishing as desirable outcomes of a drive for enhanced employability. The discourse is dominated by a technicist and instrumentalist wielding of terms, constructs and concepts that reduces people to suppliers of sets of skills and types of knowledge demanded by industry or mandated by government. Yet, the demand–supply continuum also masks the flawed structure that positions workers and students as architects of their own designer-style employability. Responsiveness – as a separate analytic category – becomes, therefore, correspondingly problematic. Who should be responding to whom, and in what way, is unclear.

The overall review has been divided into two papers. The first paper (Working Paper no. 8 in the LMIP series) has two main foci: a critical overview of employability and a summary of debates pertinent to Further Education and Training (FET) colleges and universities. Where relevant, perspectives from domains other than education and training are presented to open lines of thinking that could stimulate differently generative conceptualisation and enquiry. Green's (2002: 611) caution that

globalisation has given rise to an internationalised education policy discourse, which 'can obscure as well as illuminate what is actually going on', provides a framing qualification to this first paper as it seeks to interrogate pervasive threads of the discourse. Such a critique opened the way for a second paper, the aim of which is to engage more deeply with some of the disjunctures and dissonances.

As a separate publication, the second paper (forthcoming in the LMIP working paper series) will focus on developing an augmented and expanded view of competence and capability as aspects of employability. These are not usually included in the construct. However, the ideological difficulties posed by a conventional reading of employability and responsiveness necessitated a rethinking of how an individual might study and work in ways that benefit not only society at large, but also contribute to an individual's overall quality of life. Reconceptualising what it means to enable people to thrive as citizens of South Africa, engaged in decent work with which they can identify and which has the potential for future well-being and life enhancement, emerged as a separate undertaking for which I draw on the work of Sen (1993), Nussbaum (1993), Rauner (2007) and Walker (2010), amongst others. For them, capabilities and competencies have deeper and wider senses and applications than theories of human capital development. When applied to a variety of different contexts, their work also opens up a theoretical space for considering how exclusion, inequality and deprivation manifest in a system and constrain the development of employability (Wang 2013). Aligned with these more complex readings is a correspondingly unsettled notion of responsiveness, particularly around the debates concerning the place of knowledge in the curriculum, and training and occupational identity

formation as aspects of holistic competence. These issues are developed in depth in the second paper.

This paper begins with a brief overview of the emergence of employability as a construct. It proceeds with a critique of several key themes implicated in the discourse and present in the literature. Next, a brief, bridging introduction to an expanded notion of employability is given, followed by a summary overview of some of the central contestations and challenges pervading the literature

on FET colleges and universities. Structuring the discussion in this way prepares an analytic space for an expanded concept of holistic competence and capability as implicated in curriculum responsiveness and employability.

In both papers, key phrases and terms used in the literature, and those originating with this author, have been italicised throughout in preference to using scare quotes.

# REVIEWING THE RHETORIC

The constructs of employability and responsiveness are part of the global education rhetoric. Drawing on Hillage and Pollard, McQuaid and Lindsay, and others, Wedekind (2013) clarifies neatly the different foci of the two interlinked terms: employability focuses on the individual learner's development as the *product* of the post-school education and training system, whereas responsiveness focuses on the curriculum and institutions that *constitute* an education system. Yet, as will emerge in this discussion, the constructs are contested and the division is in reality not quite so neat. It would seem that one prevailing (if implicit) ideological ethos underlying the employability discourse is that people are independently responsible for ensuring that their education and training responds to the needs of big business. At the same time, the skills needs of the country in relation to macro-economic growth – the demand side of the labour equation – are necessarily very strong and explicit drivers shaping the educational landscape. How these two extremes of the continuum – the individual and the system – interact with what people might be willing and able to learn is, therefore, problematic. The traditional concept of responsiveness inverts: if the question has become, 'How do I make myself employable?', then exactly to what or to whom education and training institutions (E&Ts) should be responding seems unclear.

And to be useful in opening out the South African education and training landscape, the employability rhetoric needs continually to be referenced to the local in terms of educational reforms and broad socio-economic imperatives. For example, in the context of waves of reforms to South Africa's education, Young (2008) makes a relevant point. He notes that, to the extent that qualification frameworks are used by government as a

mechanism for addressing skills shortages, employability and responsiveness are intertwined. Young (2008: 121) contends that, increasingly, qualifications 'are used by governments as part of how they control educational institutions'. In an analysis of the implementation of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in South Africa, Young concludes that it is unlikely that a standards-based qualifications framework will have significant remediating impact on the education and training problems of the country, particularly in sectors that employ largely unskilled workers. (See also Fuller & Unwin 2012, for a critique of qualifications frameworks and sub-frameworks in the UK.) In positing a solution, Young is worth quoting at some length:

A quite new and more complex approach is needed that does not rely on employers generating demands for more qualified people. It is likely to involve a new type of leadership role for college and university partnerships ... in policy terms the implications of these suggestions would of course involve a complete rethink and reorganisation of existing relationships (and the creation of such relationships where they are lacking ...) between professions, universities, colleges, employers and awarding bodies that would be specific for each sector. (2008: 135–136)

The role that education and training institutions might play in shifting the discourse is crucial. Further, a reinvigorated understanding of the complexity of the systemic processes that interact at different levels to effect employability and responsiveness, as conventionally used in the debates, is similarly imperative.

Part of Young's *more complex approach* could factor in an expanded and augmented concept of employability, which sees the individual learner and/or work-seeker as becoming empowered with portable, knowledge-rich qualifications (McQuaid & Lindsay 2005; Young 2008), enabling occupational trajectories that align tightly to a person's identification with an occupational sector, rather than as a so-called *project of the self* to be undertaken in response to the demands of the labour market. Similarly, in a 2006 report commissioned by the Higher Education Academy in the UK, Yorke et al. (2006: 2) note that 'employability is considerably more complex than some proponents of a set of core, key and transferable skills have suggested, and is strongly aligned with the academic value of good learning'. Drawing principally on the work of Winch (1998), Wheelahan (2010) and Young (2008), the notion of good learning as an aspect of employability, particularly in trades and occupations, becomes a key theoretical consideration. In human resource (HR) studies, employability is similarly seen as a multidimensional construct emerging from

transitions in Western organisational imperatives and structures. Heijde and Van Der Heijden (2006: 451) frame it as a 'symbol used to address work-related problems' related to these transitions.

In sum, although this paper is a review of some of the relevant literature, it also offers a critique that aims to disturb the conventional associations between employability and responsiveness. Further, it repositions these terms in the discourse such that the lived experiences, opportunities, obstacles and choices made by people are foregrounded. It is people – not a pipeline – who supply skills to society. People need job security to flourish. It is telling that the employability debate is not underpinned by much empirical research into security as a dimension of employability (Wittekind et al. 2010). Brown et al. (2002) refer to this as *the democratisation of insecurity*. And if individuals themselves are being positioned as the drivers of their own employability, then prevailing forces that enable, constrain or respond to this ought to be scrutinised.



# EMPLOYABILITY: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

Citing Gazier (1998, in McGrath 2009) as one of the foremost theorists of employability, McGrath traces the concept's development through seven stages from a simplistic dichotomy between the *employable and deserving* and the *degenerate unemployable* in need of reform prevalent in the early 1900s, through to a more contemporary notion of *interactive employability*. In this, E&T institutions, employers, policy-makers and individuals are seen as co-contributors in the overall employability project. Crucially, McGrath argues that the contemporary view of employability is not a definitive endpoint of these various stages, emerging from different countries and in response to divergent social and political events over the last century, but that defining elements of the successive trends remain active in the discourse. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) question the extent to which employability is in fact understood as interactive, asserting rather that deficits in the supply side dominate the debates. For example, a recent South African study is underpinned by a view of employability which:

presupposes pro-active career behaviours and capacities that help people to fulfil, acquire or create work through the optimal use of both occupation-related and career meta-competencies. (Potgieter & Coetzee 2013: 2)

Absent from these assumptions is any sense of how E&Ts and employers are implicated in the application – or not – of meta-competencies.

Gazier's *initiative employability* stage – in which the responsibility for finding work shifted firmly to the individual – is given a more nuanced elaboration by Wedekind (2013). Drawing on Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), Wedekind locates this shift to individual responsibility in a fundamental change in

the nature of work itself. Processes of modernisation, technological innovation and globalisation have transformed the world of work. A steady, benefit-rich and linear career pathway in a single firm, which provided an employee with high levels of security, gradually gave way to the positioning of workers as autonomous, engaged in processes of equipping themselves with sets of skills that matched industry needs: the matching of the *project of the self* to the project of labour demand. In other words, employability came to be seen as the 'capacity people must be equipped with if they are to be called upon for projects' (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005, in Wedekind 2013: 3; see also Collin et al. 2012; Fugate et al. 2004; Sok et al. 2013; and Van Der Heijde & Van Der Heijden 2006).

## Different gazes: Some critiques of employability

There are many critics of what McQuaid and Lindsay (2005: 204) term this *supply-side orthodoxy* of employability. For example, Yorke et al. (2006: 2, emphasis added) argue that 'employability [is] a set of achievements which constitute a necessary *but not sufficient* condition for the gaining of employment (which is dependent, inter alia, on the state of the economy)'. This suggests that employability is a complex multiplicity in which a person's particular attributes are but one component.

At a broader level, Hallier (2009) critiques employability debates and offers controversial yet thought-provoking insights on employability from organisational theory, management studies and social identity theory. His argument resonates strongly with critical stances, alluded to above, which position the learner and/or work-seeker as being responsible for developing their skills to satisfy

industry demand. Hallier's critiques also resonate with more philosophical positions, such as Nussbaum's (in Walker 2010) notion of *preference deformation*, which arises in the face of government and industry demands to predict how education might be made more relevant to an unknown future (in Walker, 2010). As Arendt (in Walker 2010: 15) argues, 'education should not prescribe a particular future', and especially not one envisioned or determined by anyone other than the autonomous individual for theirs and the common good. And, given that Hallier's (2009: 863) conclusions are premised on a call for 'employability to be treated as a substantial issue worthy of conceptual development and sustained empirical examination', it seems pertinent to include in this discussion his assertions in some depth.

Hallier critiques as unsubstantiated two fundamental tenets on which the employability discourse is premised. First, the assumption that employees are facing a radically different world of work in which there is a high risk of employment insecurity. Second, he problematises the often-espoused benefits of employer-led skills development as enabling workers to move horizontally within organisations, and transversally across different organisations within the same or alternate sectors (cf. Sok et al. 2013). Hallier claims that the extent of skill-enhancement is likely to be superficial and thus does not truly empower the employee to progress upward in an occupational field. Rather, the skills development offered is oriented towards serving the interests of the employer:

The emphasis placed on horizontal re-skilling conflates the interests of employees in maintaining their currency in the external labour market with the interest of management in maximizing the organisation's functional flexibility. (2009: 849)

Even a cursory glance at courses offered by corporate training providers in South Africa seems to lend some credence to Hallier's argument<sup>1</sup>. Many are short, generic modules targeted at functions particular to certain sectors. Similarly, by way of illustration, the following excerpt from a recent article on drivers of ostensibly good HR practices

resonates with Hallier's claim that the employability discourse masks the privileging of corporate interests in the guise of empowering employees.

Attracting and retaining talent has cost implications for an organisation and therefore it will make a huge contribution towards profitability if HR can successfully manage the talent planning process ... In light of the fact that research shows that HR has not been meeting business needs, HR professionals [must] focus and align HR with organisational needs, to keep the bottom line in mind and make HR decisions that will contribute towards profitability<sup>2</sup>.

Hallier (2009: 849) goes as far as claiming that shallow, horizontal skills development 'bind[s] employees to the organisation'. Drawing on empirical studies of teamworking, it was found that experienced work-seekers are aware that superficial skills development 'limit[s] opportunities to acquire the type of evolving depth of skill necessary to gain alternative employment' (2009: 849) and is thus a militating factor against employability which can give traction to real upward mobility. The work of Lindsay et al. (2007) on employability initiatives in the UK drew a similar conclusion.

A further key conceptual problem Hallier (2009: 850) raises in the employability debate 'is the difficulty of predicting with any accuracy the skills that employees need to learn', especially in a vaguely specified 'new world of work' (see also Barnett 2004). This further disadvantages learners and employees onto whose shoulders industry, and possibly education, has devolved the responsibility for making themselves employable – for succeeding in producing a polished *project of the self*. The following comment incisively portrays this dilemma:

Should a radical shift to the way most organisations produce their services or products become necessary, it is difficult to envisage how such a prior haphazard self-development would actually enable the necessary changes to occur without major injections of new capital investment and subsequent functional training. (2009: 850)

Moreover, if only a narrow range of sectors really face radical changes to the relevant occupational skill set in a new world of work (Hallier 2009; see also Kraak 2012), and therefore warrant an approach to employability that emphasises the acquisition of new skills, it is unlikely that organisations will invest heavily in training workers in skills that are in short supply in the external labour market (Hallier 2009; Lindsay et al. 2007). Put another way, many of the pronouncements made within the employability discourse are little more than ‘idle speculation and prophecy’ (Hallier 2009: 850).

Hallier goes on to assert that, because of this, the vigorous promotion of employability by organisations is an issue that requires interrogation by critical researchers. He (2009: 850) believes that, influenced by a neo-liberalist agenda, the discourse of employability is linked closely to ‘employers’ growing concerns about maintaining work-force control in an era of increased restructuring’ in ways that absolve them of any real responsibility for the well-being of their employees. Drawing on Merriden (1997), Hallier problematises the issue of curriculum responsiveness; where industries believe they have a right to determine the curricula of higher education and training institutions, even up to post-graduate level. This could be construed as yet another corporate tactic to control higher education, and by extension, the work-force.

McGrath (2012) maps the development of market-based approaches at a broader level but located within debates around Vocational Education and Training (VET), opening out a central tension particularly as it relates to a development model of employability. Such a model connects, in a linear causal way, a country’s economic success with the education and training of its work-force. Unlike Hallier, McGrath does not see the emergence of neo-liberalism in the 1980s as the main driver behind the currently dominant productivist model. Rather, the earlier ‘big push model of the 1960s’ (McGrath 2012: 624) influenced Western thinking around development, which has since become globally influential. Subsequently, a key mechanism propelling market-driven solutions originated ideologically with the World Bank’s 1991 policy paper (McGrath 2012), which, logically, would have

seen corporates bear the brunt of education and training provision. Yet, it is public institutions that remain the main providers of education and training; they have been the primary focus of major transformational policy reforms. According to McGrath (2012: 625), these reforms have ‘drawn heavily on the new public management (NPM) paradigm’, especially in South Africa, which positions public providers as more autonomous from outmoded state bureaucracy, and, simultaneously, more accountable to the state, industry and individual learners. The ultimate outcome of these moves links directly to employability:

Together with learners, these [public provider] institutions are now charged with maximising employability, a notion that is increasingly colonising public universities too. (2012: 625)

Putting Hallier’s contentions and McGrath’s account together then, the individual learner-worker seems to be in an invidious position. On the one hand, the market demands that corporates control what is learnt without taking any civic responsibility for the medium or long-term occupational trajectories of individuals. On the other hand, the responsibility for enhancing employability has been devolved to public higher education institutions (Knight & Yorke 2008), and most significantly, to individuals themselves, who must somehow match their career aspirations, knowledge of their chosen industry sector and individual talents, with the qualifications on offer (Unwin 2003; Wittekind et al. 2010). The hugely disproportionate number of applications made each year for positions in South African universities seem to signal these stimuli pushing individuals and the system to extremes.

This being so, the issues usually associated with curriculum responsiveness in E&T institutions – such as knowledge, skill, training and work-integrated learning – have been dislocated, necessitating an epistemological manoeuvre that incorporates these into the concept of employability (cf. Wittekind et al. 2010: 581). So, if it is up to individuals to make themselves employable, whether or not they have access to the information and resources for gaining the necessary knowledge, skills and experience becomes a separate focus of study. Issues around

capability deprivation, freedom to choose, individual agency, social exclusion and poverty have to be brought into the employability debate.

Yet, absent from the conventional demand-supply *pipeline* model is any clear sense of, as McGrath (2012: 630) puts it, 'the vocation of being human' and how industry might be held accountable in participating in a holistic view of employability that integrates 'development, work and humanity'. Expressed differently, people have been reduced to being brokers of their knowledge and skills, driven on by the imperative 'to secure one's labour market position' (De Cuyper et al., in Potgieter & Coetzee 2013: 2).

Simply put, students and workers are pressurised to make themselves employable without always having a clear idea of what that means for them as individuals who have unique histories, talents and aspirations beyond getting themselves a *scarce-skills job*. Part of the problem lies in the overlapping of terminology and concepts in the public and institutional discourse around employability and responsiveness.

The next section of the discussion presents an illustrative analysis in which this lack of clarity is critiqued.

### **Blurred vision: An exemplar of employability as a conflicted discourse**

The conceptual circularity, equivocation and ideological conflict characterising the employability discourse are clearly exemplified in Collin et al.'s (2012) editorial for a special issue of *The International Journal of Training and Development*, which focused on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and employability. Terminology is imprecise, making it difficult to arrive at a clear idea of what is meant by employability.

For example, in the editorial, employability is simplistically defined as 'career potential' (Collin et al. 2012: 158). Capabilities are mentioned but not defined. Rather, they are presented as a general set of employee qualities that must be systematically and self-reflexively assessed and subsequently modified by individuals (2012). Qualifications are at

once 'changing at an ever increasing rate', 'increasingly complex', but somehow also 'fundamental' (2012: 160). Capability is here recruited to designate a protean ability possessed by a lucky few such that only they will be the ones 'to perform optimally in today's labour market' as they 'maintain fundamental qualifications' (2012: 160). Competencies are mentioned but not explained. Their development, however, is seen as 'inevitably an individual process' the 'individual development [of which] is also linked to an organisational background and to social learning processes' (2012: 158). Compounding the conceptual imprecision are several typical-to-the-discourse assertions in Collin et al. that exemplify some of Hallier's critiques. Particularly, the tensions between the employee as manager of the *project of the self*, the demands of employers, and state control over what is learnt are evident.

Collin et al.'s paper begins with the familiar generality: employees must voluntarily continue their learning in order to ensure 'effective participation in contemporary, technology-based, knowledge society' (2012: 155). They maintain the focus on employee responsibility in relation to CPD, strongly claiming that 'lifelong learning ... is only possible where employees ... are able to form accurate self-perceptions, to carefully identify the qualities they need for future career success, and if they are able to adapt their behaviour accordingly' (2012: 157). Fugate et al. (2004: 22) describe this behaviour as characteristic of 'employees with high employability [who are able to] scan the environment to learn what jobs are available and what experience and skills are required'. So the professional or occupational worker has, continually, to identify his or her own skills development needs through self-reflective practice.

Absent from this line of thinking is any sense of how workers might know what different industry sectors need as time passes and technology advances, and whether or not there is an alignment between these needs and an individual's own life circumstances, goals and inclinations. The literature seems silent on the diverse constraints that people – as distinct from an *employee pipeline* – might face in developing this ability to *scan the environment*, although Houston's

(2005) work on the link between skills and spatial mismatches in employability goes some way toward addressing this. (See also Lindsay et al. 2007 for a study exploring area-based disadvantage in the UK.)

It is into this silence that the call for a more holistic conceptualisation of capabilities as a feature of employability speaks. As Walker contends, developing a person's 'capacity to make informed and critical choices about one's life', their sense of themselves as 'critical beings' (Barnett 1977, in Walker 2010: 9) must emerge as a key goal of higher education. For, without this ability, it is difficult to see how students and workers – as one of a set of actors in the employability system – will develop what might be thought of as an informed *internal responsiveness* to the opportunities and challenges of their circumstances. A point of conceptual delicacy emerges here: holding in tension the notion of individual *internal responsiveness* with a call for other actors in the system to offer a person something worthwhile to respond to, is a significant theoretical challenge. I want to avoid reverting to any suggestion that a single student or worker is responsible for enhancing his or her employability, for delivering the *project of the self*. This point is expanded in part 2 of this literature review, in which I augment employability and responsiveness to include a more holistic view of individual capabilities and competence.

Returning to the critique of Collin et al., intrinsically, of course, CPD and developing professional judgement have a place in the broad employability debate. But requiring interrogation is the extent to which the individual is held accountable. Perhaps even more disconcertingly, Collin et al. note that becoming professionally developed – possessing CPD – is not guaranteed by being a motivated, continually learning employee. Further, they point to the very abrogation of employer responsibility critiqued by Hallier in their qualification that 'opportunities for development offered by the employer and one's working organisation do not necessarily lead to sought outcomes' (Collin et al. 2012: 157). This is an odd proposition to juxtapose with claims that self-development is tied to organisations.

Illustrating Hallier's claims even more convincingly, if unwittingly, Collin et al. (2012: 159–160) single out in the CPD literature the 'problem of reconciling the development needs of the professional with the learning needs as defined by others, particularly employers, who in any case may be operating within a framework laid down by government'. Clearly, the contradiction that this sets up relative to prior claims about an individual's responsibility to know what industry and employees themselves need, is not obvious to the authors.

## Critiquing the self-development paradigm

Framed by possibly controversial, somewhat conspiratorial claims about the alleged hidden corporate agenda are two aspects of the employer–employee relationship, focusing on self-development, which are implicated in the employability discourse. The first relates to the responsibility for employee self-development (popularly termed *lifelong learning*) as being located, ostensibly, in a partnership between the organisation and the employee. But, as suggested above, this is an unequal partnership in which organisational interests trump those of the individual: while feeling obligated to upgrade their skills, quite possibly employees are being sold a lie that *in-house training* will make them more employable.

The second aspect of the self-development project is the new psychological contract. All that is new about the contemporary employer–employee contract is that it is a reworking of the construct as originally propounded. This remixed construct is:

a managerialist version of the employment relationship which is not only normative but also which eschews many of the essential features of contracting, such as mutuality, reciprocity, voluntariness, paid for promises, and notions of breach and violation for non-fulfilment of obligations under the agreement. (Hallier 2009: 852)

Hallier (2009: 852) goes on to assert that the adoption of the new psychological contract, and by implication its inclusion into the employability



discourse, has as its real purpose the balancing of 'unequal exchanges that characterise employers' unilateral withdrawal of careers and security with their pursuit of employee commitment'. Within market rhetoric, employability is marshalled by industry to condition work-seekers to accept as normative a labour environment that, at once wants committed and skilled workers, but that does not – or cannot – reciprocate by enhancing the marketability and job security of workers (2009). Hallier sums it up this way:

As workers we are being told to become more enterprising people and more responsible beings [and] within employers' applications of neo-liberalism in the labour market the employee's exercise of freedom takes the form of the behaviour of a seller of skills expected to follow the competitive rules of conduct. (2009: 853)

Employability becomes almost a device – or a mechanism – by means of which, in conditions where there has been a 'loosening of organisational commitment (to markets, tradition and employees)' (Van Der Heijde & Van Der Heijden 2006: 449), employees are supposedly equipped to adapt to a constantly changing world of work. Strangely, in such a volatile, unknowable future-oriented scenario, individuals are expected 'to keep track of their competences and career needs' (Van Der Heijde & Van Der Heijden 2006: 450). As some theorists claim, organisational changes have resulted in a reduction in the level of skills specialisation required and an increase in teamwork. It is claimed that, 'increasingly, domain-specific occupational expertise is insufficient to guarantee positive work outcomes during the course of one's entire career' (Van Der Heijde & Van Der Heijden 2006: 450). For learners and workers, whose 'career development is largely dependent upon initiatives and investments of [the employees] themselves' (Hall 1976, in Van der Heijde & Van Der Heijden 2006: 450), it seems almost impossible to discern the pathway to employability that has as its outcome secure and satisfying work. Yet, at the opposite extreme of the debate is a view framed by an acceptance of the entrenchment of global capitalism. In the modern world of work, 'if organisations depend on the knowledge and skills of

the work-force, then power rests with those that have the knowledge, skills and insights that companies want' (Brown et al. 2002: 5). Put another way, those who have the most 'initiative, energy [and] entrepreneurial flair' (Brown et al. 2002: 5) are the ones likely to have job security and career mobility.

And even where research attempts to foreground the role that a psychological contract might play in balancing employer–employee obligations, the advantages for employers continue to be privileged. For example, one study drawing significantly on the influential work of Fugate et al. (2004) explores the relationship between the psychological contract and self-perceived employability amongst a cohort of 247 graduates of Hotelschool The Hague (Sok et al. 2013). Although the responsibility of organisations to promote conditions that foster employability is posited as advantageous, the direction of the advantage is towards the organisation. The psychological contract is operationalised in ways that endorse the prevailing *project of the self* in which the balance of accountability is unequally weighted against the individual. So, in Sok et al.'s study, they use the following employability measures as variables to analyse their data. These measures are categorised as being both external and internal to the organisation:

1. An employee's *intra-organisational mobility intentions* relative to his or her degree of 'willingness to be flexible and adaptable to the needs of the organisation';
2. A *behavioural measure*, 'because being employable also implies the need for employees to proactively work on their development; and
3. A *capability measure*, 'because employees have to remain marketable for other organisations' (2013: 276).

Sok et al.'s findings suggest that 'employers who respond to the growth needs of their employees may obtain a larger number of reactions resulting in higher employability levels' (2013: 281). Exactly what these levels might be, or achieve, is not specified. The apparently positive tenor of this conclusion is counterbalanced by their earlier positioning of highly employable workers as 'necessary for organisations

to meet the fluctuating demands for numerical and functional flexibility' (2013: 274).

Sok et al.'s study is an example of the way in which employability, even within the apparent terms of a psychological contract, occludes somewhat the extent to which the burden of obtaining meaningful, secure and decent work rests on individual shoulders.

Thus, as McGrath (2009) notes in his comparative study of British and South African VET, generally, in both of these countries, there is little substantial return to the individual from investments in education and training in spite of policy and industry rhetoric. More directly, Fuller and Unwin (2012) found that within the education landscape in the UK, there are systemic blockages: apprentices and students with vocational qualifications cannot easily progress into degree courses.

Whose interests are being served, then, in the calls for employees to enhance their employability, and for greater curriculum responsiveness, must be explored and evaluated in the context of policy reform. Conversely, calls for more theoretically rigorous, knowledge-based qualifications that are endorsed by relevant professional and occupational bodies of experts (Wheelahan 2010; Young 2008) must be heeded. And training as a desirable and necessary pedagogic strategy (Winch 1998) resonates with the project of holistic and autonomous development that stands in opposition to an alleged managerialist manipulation of the work-force. If people are being held responsible for making themselves employable, then the opportunities for taking control of their learning and the quality of what is offered to them, need to be strengthened. Personal agency takes on a more nuanced complexity in this contested terrain.

## Employees as critical agents

Interestingly, in Hallier's account, the worker is not positioned as the continuously hapless dupe of big business. Drawing on his own analysis of management rhetoric, and that of Collinson and Collinson and of Thompson (in Hallier 2009), Hallier points to employees' sceptical awareness of the gap

between management-speak around employability and whose interests are really being served. Such an awareness is further elaborated, crucially, in the disjuncture between the level of employee commitment desired by organisations as a pivotal aspect of employability and employees' own identification of themselves as workers in general and occupational specialists in particular. Further, individuals' self-identification within the world of work resonates with the present discussion's intention to incorporate an augmented notion of competence as holistic (Rauner 2007), and is closely linked to the multiple subjectivities of workers as experts-in-training, members of diverse communities and citizens. And although the influential work of Fugate et al. (2004) reflects some of the critiques presented above – particularly their focus on an individual's adaptive behaviour – the premise that 'employability is a synergistic collection of individual characteristics that is energised and directed by an *individual's career identity* (2004: 18, emphasis added; see also 2004: 21) does add a slightly more balanced dimension to the debate.

But, returning to Hallier's problematisation of the tension between the corporate drive for commitment as an aspect of employability, and employee agency – or *internal responsiveness* – in the uptake and interpretation of this, a somewhat detailed explication is warranted.

Theoretically, a distinction is made between employability and organisational commitment (Hallier 2009: 854–857). Critical commentators have concluded that the rhetoric/reality gap is responsible for the failure of the employability message to generate the outcome desired by organisations: employees withhold their commitment because they know that while they 'are being exhorted to be committed to the organisation [they also must] accept that they are disposable in times of crisis' (Hallier 2009: 855). However, Hallier posits that the employability message may well affect workers independently, and in ways that speak more broadly to issues of their value in the overall labour market: beyond commitment to an organisation, employability has traction within workers' self-identification with their lives and career trajectories. Drawing on Bruner's work in social categorisation,

Hallier (2009: 856) asserts that collections of social stimuli are self-defining and that, in relation to employability, 'when more inclusive worker self-definitions are triggered, [employability's] meaning may be entirely different'. The focus of this difference lies in an individual's identification as a member of the labour market in general rather than of an organisation in particular, but with a future-oriented concern for inclusion into specific occupational communities. Simply put, the employability message may find purchase within people not because they buy in to managerialist calls for organisational commitment, but because they identify with the need to secure employment for themselves as workers and as occupational specialists (cf. Rauner 2007).

Drawing extensively on work done in social categorisation and identity theory, Hallier argues that the credibility of the employability message lies in shared group belonging. In other words:

The point is that whether or not the employability idea is awarded personal salience will not just depend on the employee's concerns about insecurity or skill obsolescence but also on how similar the communicator is perceived to be the receiver's member group ... only those with whom we believe we share a common self-definition will be seen as credible to inform us about relevant aspects of social reality and thus reduce our uncertainty. (2009: 857)

An important and credible source of information about changes, tensions and insecurities in the employment landscape generally and occupations in particular is a person's social network. Considering information from these sources as a crucial component of the employability message does not seem to be factored in to the general debate. Within a reconceptualised construct of employability and responsiveness linked to individual social and cultural capital, identity and agency, it becomes a significant inclusion. However, there is an interplay of tensions related to social identity and personal agency. From the perspective of social identity theory, it is unlikely that employees will act on the

employability message to pursue occupational mobility unless and until they, at times, privilege their individual worth and progress over that of the work or occupational group to which they affiliate themselves (Hallier 2009); until an issue becomes personally salient to the extent that it transcends collective solidarity. This is a delicate point to capture: it is not that people always and only must respond in an individualised way. Rather, the decision 'to pursue either individual goals or the interests of a collective membership [thus] will derive from *how a specific context* triggers the salience of a personal or social self-category' (Hallier 2009: 859, emphasis added).

So for us in South Africa, where worker solidarity has been crucial to political transformation and continues as a formidable force in the ongoing transformation imperative, holding on to the idea of choice in response to employability drivers could be an important thread to maintain in the overall discourse. Additionally, it could also present itself as a constraining tension that prevents employees from benefiting from those aspects of the employability message that will enhance their lives.

A further layer of complexity is added by findings from social identity theory, specifically on research into tokenism. There is a worrying suggestion that, where the employability message succeeds in obtaining uncritical buy-in to the *project of the self*, or a portfolio career ethos, the emergence of even a few instances of individual employee mobility might correlate with weakened occupational group identification and hence, diminished collective bargaining power over legitimate grievances. Drawing on findings from the work of Taylor, Moghaddam, Gamble and Zellerer, evidence suggests that 'only a few group members are needed to endorse an ideology of individual mobility for any existing propensity for collective protest to become weakened' (Hallier 2009: 860).

In South Africa's persistently unequal society, the tension, then, between the need for some sense of self-advancement for the enhancement of individual occupational prospects is dynamically counteracted by a culture of collective, transformative action. This tension needs to be foregrounded as, possibly, both



a constraining and enabling mechanism in employability and responsiveness, particularly in juxtaposition with contested claims about whose interests are really being served in the demand for skills development. Inherent to societies characterised by persistent social inequality are many different kinds of barriers to employability.

## **Systemic barriers to employability**

Isolating barriers to employment as a distinct strand within the employability debate merits a full exploration, which is not within the scope of this paper to address. But some brief comments can be made.

In general, theoretical debates around employability do not incorporate into the construct the complexities and practical implications of chronic, endemic social disadvantage amongst particular groups of people and in the lives of individuals. But an illuminating study of disadvantaged communities was conducted by Lindsay et al. (2007). They investigated several targeted pilot employability programmes amongst the long-term unemployed in the UK's most under-achieving and poorest communities, typically found in the housing estates. Part of the underpinning rationale for this study aimed at problematising 'the corrosive effects of an ideological ethos that encourages people with multiple needs and problems to blame themselves for their failure in the labour market' (Dean et al. 2004, in Lindsay et al. 2007).

Employability programmes aimed to provide holistic, long-term supportive strategies for people trying to overcome barriers to work. The kinds of disadvantages that the pilot programmes identified included physical and mental illness; ineffective job search skills; the absence of aspiration to work in the face of persistent unemployment; lack of skills; low literacy levels and learning problems; absence of role models and work-successful social networks and problems accessing work opportunities owing to spatial mismatches. Lack of childcare facilities was also found to constrain employment.

The study concluded that while specific, intensively focused employability interventions had achieved

some gains, in general 'employability services continue to fail many among the most disadvantaged' (Lindsay et al. 2007: 557). Further, Lindsay et al. (2007: 557) observe that, at a policy level:

Improving the employability of people excluded from the labour market requires action to address a range of problems, adverse personal circumstances and external barriers to work.

The implications for South Africa of such findings, although drawn from a single study in a highly developed and well-resourced country, seem clear. There are three main yet inter-related factors salient to our situation: first, the multiple and persistent effects of apartheid; second, the HIV/Aids pandemic; and third, the scale and extent of the so-called NEETs. These, and the development imperatives of the country, compel a reimagined concept of employability; one that can give traction to empirical studies in which the goal is to describe, account for and understand the range of personal and communal barriers to employment in South Africa's persistently unequal and fragmented society. Government, E&Ts, industry and civil society might then co-operate with a greater degree of cohesion and shared purpose in reconfiguring the post-school sector.

Returning to Hallier's contribution to the employability debate, it is clear that it centres on critics ceasing to interrogate the issue once the rhetoric/reality gap has been acknowledged. The determinism associated with the call for employability to address empirically unverifiable claims about the nature of work in the future is questioned. He problematises the conflation of employer-led demand for commitment with employability rhetoric itself, exposing the tensions of the new psychological contract that has assumed a normative quality. Further, drawing on social identity theory, he opens out some of the complexities associated with how social mobility disjunctively traverses individual self-identification and group belonging. A final and important aspect of employability he interrogates is the suitability/

self-efficacy notion advocated in particular by Bandura (1997, in Hallier 2009).

## Ineffective self-efficacy

Hallier argues that there is widespread abuse of self-efficacy theory, which in employability discourse is reworked into employability confidence.

Encapsulated in this notion is the central idea that employees have to convince, through displays of adaptive confidence in diverse and unknowable employment settings, that they are worthy of employment (Collin et al. 2012; Fugate & Kinicki 2008). Potentially problematic is how work-seekers negotiate cultural mismatches between workplaces and their experiences as scholars and students in diverse communities. Linked to this is the idea of the boundary-less career, where, if one is sufficiently worthy, one will be employable. It is a re-worked American Dream that masks factors beyond the control of the individual work-seeker, especially in today's volatile, globalised economic climate.

Interwoven into employability efficacy are strands of popular motivational psychology and self-empowerment approaches. In the singular domain of an individual's private lifeworld, these might be innocuous. But when incorporated into public discourses linked to macro social, education, economic and political imperatives, asserting as justifiable and normal the individual's responsibility for being adaptive to ephemeral future scenarios is less innocuous.

Hallier's key concern is the absence of empirical evidence to justify the relevance to labour markets, both now and in the future, of the application of efficacy theory. Consequently, efficacy theory:

acts to legitimise employers' increasing replacement of job skills criteria with those of person-centred suitability ... justify[ing] the shift in management's selection and assessment criteria even further away from functional skills and abilities and more towards the normative control of individual deference and cooperation. (2009: 863)

Hallier's critiques have been used in this discussion as fulcrums around which to leverage and expose some of the key complications in the employability debate and how they might be pertinent to South Africa's unique challenges. A profoundly unequal schooling system, inherited as part of South Africa's separatist ideology, persists in disadvantaging many young people who apply to the country's post-school institutions. If they manage to graduate, the disparities between organisational culture and expectations and the lived experiences of work-seekers, make it very difficult for many to find employment. This is often recontextualised in the discourse as employers' criticising the absence of generic or soft skills amongst graduates. Issues around worker solidarity and group identity also complicate the terrain. Accounting for the role of labour unions in intricate configurations of solidarity and belonging is important in understanding how the employability message might be received when it comes from the corporate sector. Formulating a response, then, to a diverse, delicate and interconnected multiplicity of stimuli to employability cannot be thought of in simple linear cause-and-effect terms.

The discussion will now shift briefly to formulating a model for rethinking employability and responsiveness.

# MOVING TOWARDS AN EXPANDED VIEW OF EMPLOYABILITY AND CURRICULUM RESPONSIVENESS

McQuaid and Lindsay's (2005) interactive, holistic framework for employability offers a remediating theoretical alternative to the traditional and reductionist demand–supply dichotomy (Figure 1). Individual and external factors together with personal circumstances are conceived in a non-hierarchical way and as interacting dynamically to constrain and/or enable employability. Both the needs of the person and the broader skills requirements of sectors of industry are acknowledged as variables in the overall system (Figure 2). The strength of such an approach is that:

By reordering employability in this way ... it is not just individual, supply side factors that require detailed description and analysis, but all aspects of the employability equation, including demand. (McQuaid & Lindsay 2005: 213)

And drawing on Brown's critique of Hillage and Pollard's definition of employability, Yorke et al. (2006) frame it as an intersection of the absolute and the relative. Individual characteristics and achievements comprise the absolute dimension; the state of the labour market comprises the relative dimension. This is a simple but useful theoretical move that foregrounds a need to hold in tension the interplay of factors within and beyond the control of individual work-seekers.

In adding to these frameworks an augmented notion of competence (Rauner 2007), and incorporating

well-being and agency (Sen 1993) and sphere of choice (Nussbaum 1993) as features of employability and curriculum responsiveness, I want to move towards foregrounding the needs, desires, histories, subjectivities, individuality – the simple humanity – of those who must be employable.

In South Africa, this remains an important point of focus given the ways in which the legacy of apartheid persists. There is still a chasm between that which people might choose to do to flourish as employed citizens of the country and that which they end up having to do because of continued deprivation and exclusion. Making oneself employable cannot happen separately from restoring human dignity to the daily lives of people. The systemic factors that continue to constrain the majority of South Africans must be brought into the debate. This is a major focus of comparative research and is not within the scope of this discussion to address exhaustively.

Therefore, this section is intentionally brief, functioning only as a theoretical bridge to a different view of employability and curriculum responsiveness, which will be developed in detail in a subsequent position paper. The discussion shifts now to the ways in which post-school institutions (DHET 2013) are implicated in employability and responsiveness.

Figures 1 and 2 are illustrated separately overleaf.

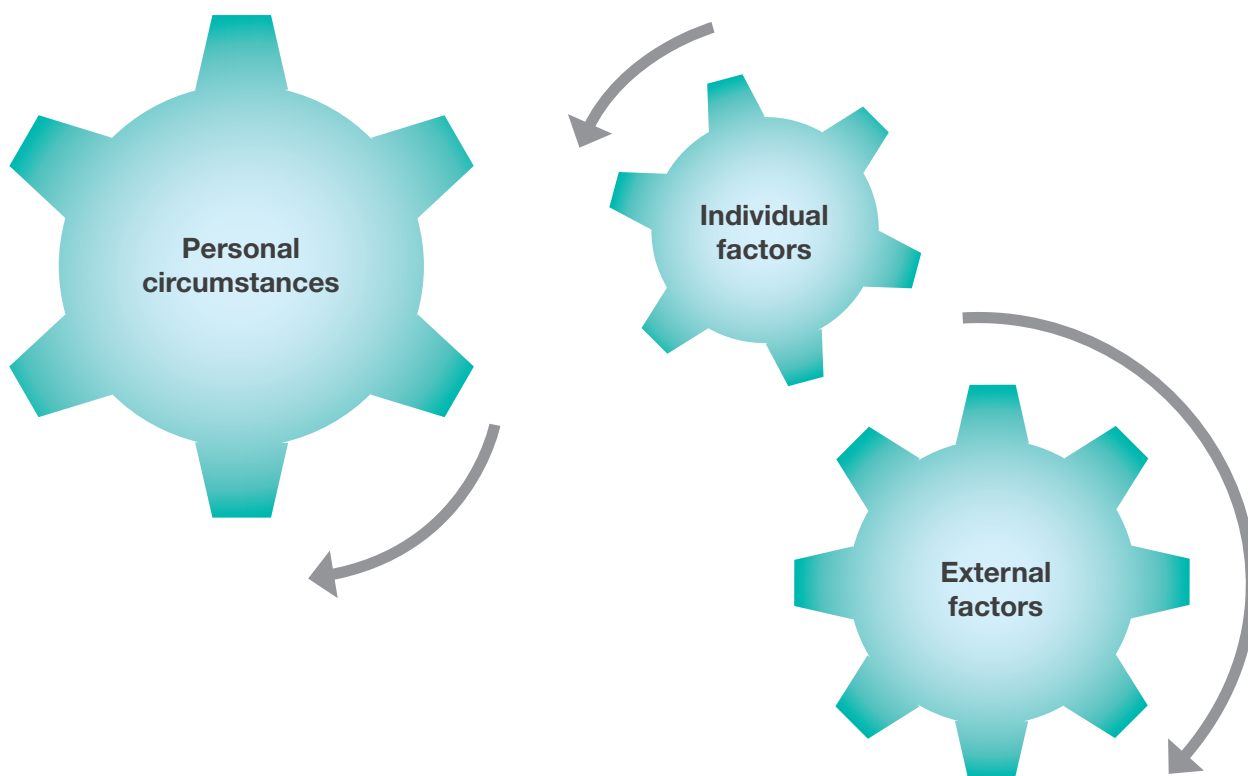


Figure 1. McQuaid and Lindsay's Interactive Employability Framework

<b>Individual Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employability skills and attributes</li> <li>• Demographic characteristics</li> <li>• Health and well-being</li> <li>• Job seeking</li> <li>• Adaptability and mobility</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Circumstances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household circumstances</li> <li>• Work culture</li> <li>• Access to resources</li> </ul>
<b>External Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand factors</li> <li>• Enabling support factors</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Factors within the Interactive Employability Framework

# RESPONSES OF THE POST-SCHOOL E&T SECTOR TO EMPLOYABILITY

In opposing apartheid, South Africa's education system has historically been a driver of social transformation. This is widely documented and reviewed in the literature. In contemporary debates the focus of change has shifted from an overtly political agenda to an economic one in the context of South Africa's emergence as a regional superpower. The need to innovate, to find our place in the global knowledge society, to develop the country's infrastructure and to expand the manufacturing sector, are some of the key imperatives energising the government's drive to reconfigure the post-school sector. Within the employability debate, the skills needs of the country are, in line with conventional human capital development models, linked to economic prosperity for individuals. The path along which both the country and the individual will prosper is, it is claimed, more and better post-school education and training. The role that universities and colleges have to play in this project has therefore assumed critical transformative importance.

The following discussion points to some pertinent issues and draws variously on both South African and international literature. It is not intended as an exhaustive analysis, but might suggest directions for further enquiry.

## A contextual frame

In 1999, a Council on Higher Education (CHE) discussion paper<sup>3</sup> identified the higher education (HE) transformation policy objectives of South Africa as being constituted by several key focus areas. Among these were:

1. Increased and broadened participation within HE to meet personpower needs and advance social equity;

2. Curriculum re-structuring and knowledge production that is responsive to societal interests and needs; and
3. Incorporation of HE programmes and qualifications within a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (1999).

Further, the paper identified several challenges to achieving transformation, some of which have been, more or less, successfully negotiated. However, several obstacles identified seem to linger still; namely, weak or fragile governance and management at various levels of the system (Wedekind 2010), and a weak knowledge and information base and/or processing capacity.

In combination, the HE transformation focus areas and the perceived obstacles continue to remain challenges not only to education, but to the country as a whole, as noted in the recently released 2012 Government Development Indicators report<sup>4</sup>. Analysing South Africa's transition to a knowledge economy, the following observation is made:

South Africa continues to slip on the Knowledge-Based Economy Index. Most middle income countries like South Africa continue to grow if they can strengthen human resources (HR), especially skills and innovation, and the use of information and communication technologies. Growth would be higher now and in the future, if South Africa could strengthen its knowledge-base. (2012: 19)

This is not news, however. A 2002 study into partnerships between industry and higher education was motivated by the imperative to 'bridge the innovation chasm in ways that can meet development goals' (Kruss 2005: 4). At that time, the

restructuring of South Africa's Higher Education Institutions (HEI) had not yet been implemented. But the study cautioned that the system as it existed then was fraught with conflicting and contradictory tensions reflected in the differentiated founding imperatives and purposes associated with individual institutions. Simply put, the envisaged system of HEIs would 'need to create new balances of these "contradictory functions"' (Kruss 2005: 4), as well as forge partnerships with industry to foster innovation and respond to the globalising networked knowledge economy.

And yet, South Africa's education and labour system continue to reflect imbalances. A 2013 CHE report on curriculum reform in HE opens out the problem in much stronger terms in relation, specifically, to low levels of undergraduate success: the report notes that under 5% of african and coloured youth are succeeding in HE, while across all population groups, completion rates are low. Disturbingly, the report contends that:

These performance patterns are not compatible with South Africa's need to develop the intellectual talent in all its communities. Moreover, there are not grounds for hoping that the patterns are a temporary aberration. They have not changed significantly since the intake cohort of 2000 ... and given the conditions in the education system as a whole, they will not improve without decisive intervention. (2013: 17)<sup>5</sup>

A further worrying trend is the low level of Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) graduates, which exacerbates weak innovation and slow transition to a knowledge economy. Added to this mix is that by the end of 2012, unemployment had risen steadily, with 70% of people without work being between 16 and 34 years old. A continual refrain of industry in this toxic mix is a lack of skilled workers.

This skills mismatch is frequently attributed to a systemic, ongoing failure of HE to transform and respond to the education needs of industry – or, in other words, that there is a 'significant gap in collaboration between formal learning institutions and the workplace as to what skills and expertise

need to be taught in order to service the requirements of workplace now and in the future'.<sup>6</sup>

However, what is clear from the previous discussion is that responsiveness is highly complex and dynamic, especially in a transitional society such as South Africa (Cosser et al. 2003). Simply put, whether it is possible to capture in a construct, a word, the difficulty of synergising a historically differentiated education and training system, a regionally and globally unpredictable labour market and a national economy, is unclear. And is it possible to hold HEIs accountable for responding to calls for enhanced employability, given the multiplicity of contested dimensions encompassed by that concept? Assuming a shift to a knowledge economy as inevitable and desirable is problematic, which is indicated from this point on by the bracketing of [knowledge] in the term. And if, as McGrath (in Cosser et al. 2003) argues, the discourse of responsiveness originated not in education but as a consequence of economic crises, then the path to discerning boundaries of theoretical and empirical foci is convoluted. Analysing the enablers and constraints in the employability-responsiveness system becomes a multidisciplinary enterprise, drawing on economics, sociology, education, psychology and organisational theory amongst others (Green 2013). A further complication is that HEIs themselves are operating in a contested milieu where 'the discourse of the market now vies with the norms of critical scholarship' (Selden 2004: 52). Thus, the capacities of HEIs are one aspect of an assemblage of components interacting with each other in complex ways (DeLanda 2002; 2006).

For example, claims for the increasing value of generic skills – their so-called transferability and applicability to the continuously changing [knowledge] economy – are made from many different sources within the overall discourse. In their report on Learning and Employability in HEIs in the UK, Yorke et al. (2006) draw on the work of Reich, who argues that advanced economies need expertise differentiated along two lines: 1) the ability to innovate; and 2) the ability to exploit and market innovations, which would rely primarily on interpersonal skills. This corresponds loosely with a disciplinary knowledge/generic skills dichotomy.

Yorke et al. go on to explore Reich's notion of symbolic analysts, graduate professionals who have mastered the use of abstract knowledge; who are able to engage in systems thinking; who are able to use their knowledge, analytic ability and intuition to experiment; and who are able to collaborate.

On the other hand, there is a generalised concern over a lack of occupation-specific skills. For example, there is the perception that while '[humanities] graduates have the intellectual capacity, they do not have immediately applicable technical skills capabilities that employers can put to work ... in comparison to an accountant or an engineer'.<sup>7</sup> Common to the competing voices and calls for HEIs to transform and respond to the needs of the labour market is the reiteration of the uncertainty of the future, of the dynamism of the networked [knowledge] economy.

But sitting in between, or perhaps transcending these empirically and theoretically shifting contentions, is Barnett's call for a radical rethinking, one that insists that learning for an unknown future in which *supercomplexity* is the definitive characteristic should not be expressed in terms of the knowledge/skills dichotomy, but 'of human qualities and dispositions' (Barnett 2004: 1). The basis for his call is an ontological shift: he argues that the change being experienced by humanity as we move towards a globally connected information society is radically and fundamentally different from previous agrarian, industrial or social transformations. Principally, the quality of the change is characterised by high degrees of intensity and impact. We are inhabiting a 'world order in which the changes are characteristically internal. They are primarily to do with how individuals understand themselves, with their sense of identity (or lack of it), with their *being* in the world' (Barnett 2004: 2, original emphasis). In thinking about people knowing how to work and to flourish, their sense of how their being is affected as they negotiate the uncertainty and flux of the modern world needs to be retained in theoretical considerations of employability and responsiveness and the role education plays in these.

The role South African HEIs are being called to play is framed against a vision of education that is integrative, and in which the:

distinction of a South African citizen will have a great deal to do with the quality of their education; skills they carry as a measure of their competence; the quality of the institutions in which they live and work; the measure of their awareness of the solemn calls of citizenship; and the longevity of their lives to sustain the impact of their contributions to the commonwealth ... [these] are the product of conscious and deliberate effort. (CHE 2013: 10)

The conscious and deliberate efforts contributed by South Africa's formal education system are differentiated in many ways. Kraak (2012: 1) poses two axes of differentiation of the post-school sector: first, the 'trinary divide within higher education' and secondly, the 'hard binary divide between further education and HE'. Within HE, the trinary divide is between: research-teaching; and academic versus occupational foci. This divide manifests as a division between types of universities: academic, comprehensive and universities of technology. Separately, Kraak includes as a sub-sector (not a further division *within* HE, though) publicly funded sector-specific colleges: agricultural, nursing, etc. Further education, that is post-school and pre-degree, comprises a range of providers but includes public FET colleges. Kraak argues that insufficient policy has been formulated to address the 'hard binary divide' between HE and FE. Such a rupture in reticulation within the overall system has many ramifications for people trying to move between the two. Ultimately employability prospects are limited. (See also Fuller & Unwin 2012.) Responsiveness needs to occur at this macro level if more meso and micro interventions in institutional and curricula responsiveness can be effective.

Additionally, Kraak offers a further layer of differentiation that is useful for rethinking responsiveness. He proposes a six-part model of demand-driven skill provision for education and training institutions (Kraak 2012). The purpose is to show that 'multiple labour markets and highly



variegated sectoral production regimes exist within a single national economy' (Kraak 2012: 9) that is, to disrupt a view of a monolithic move to a sophisticated [knowledge] society. This speaks to the need to see responsiveness in a more nuanced way. Simply put, if there is a high degree of differentiation in the demand side, there has to be a correspondingly differentiated response to that demand. And a deep and thorough knowledge of each of the six skills levels needs to inform calls for curriculum responsiveness.

Framed by these qualifications within the debate, the discussion now turns to a brief overview of concerns pertaining to the FE and HE sectors separately. It is not within the scope of this paper to include an in-depth review of Kraak's category of sector-specific colleges, or to address in detail apprenticeships and learnerships. These are complicated entities and require a separate, sustained focus.

## **FET colleges**

Although this review has pointed to the problematisation of the ideological underpinnings of the employability and responsiveness discourse, it does not seek to reject the call for particular institutions and curricula to become more responsive (McGrath 2003; Yorke et al. 2006). The role FET colleges are being called upon to play is ultimately pivotal to the well-being of all South Africans. How the issue of curriculum responsiveness manifests in the classrooms and workshops of the colleges is therefore a central concern, as reflected in the DHET's Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training.

Writing prior to the formation of the current South African FET college system, Unwin (2003) argued for the distinctiveness of the college sector of the post-school landscape, arguments which likely still hold for the FET college. It is a transitional educational space, characterised by numerous dimensions of diversity amongst its student body and the range and levels of qualifications offered (Unwin 2003: 3). It is also a liminal space, requiring students and staff to move between the worlds of learning and work. And it is a complex space of

knowing, in which theory (Young 2008), training (Winch 1998) and practice are intertwined. As a component of post-school education, its identity is fluid and contested, caught up in the maelstrom of the implementation of policies that address inter-related economic, education, labour, civic and political agendas and priorities. As Gravatt and Silver (in Unwin 2003: 3) contend, 'colleges are the adaptive layer in the education system'. Yet, the inherently adaptive nature of colleges makes them vulnerable to processes of constant change as they attempt to respond to the needs of multiple stakeholders with divergent interests. In particular, the strength and degree of articulation between colleges and labour markets is problematic but vital to the success of the system (McGrath 2003).

Unwin raises some key questions that focus on how colleges might respond to complexity. These pertain to social justice; relationships with other actors in the post-school and labour market sectors; stakeholder hierarchies; partnerships and alliances; staff capacity; risk management; and clarifying and prioritising whose needs the college is designed to serve and how colleges should be structured to act responsively (2003). Unwin (2003: 4) contends:

How colleges (and policy-makers) answer [the] questions will depend on the way in which they conceptualise their mission; how they draw boundaries around the nature and scope of their stakeholder communities; and the tightness of the policy straightjacket they are forced to wear.

In South Africa, for example, having a national system makes local variation difficult. So, in 2007, instructing all colleges to offer the National Curriculum (Vocational) (NCV) meant that some colleges abandoned programmes that were historically well regarded with good, regionally specific industry links, but came in at the wrong level on the NQF or were not properly certified (Wedekind 2010).

South Africa has looked both to the UK and Australia to provide models for vocational education. In critiquing changes to the college sector in the UK, Unwin raised several key points which remain



relevant to the South African situation (Allais & Nathan 2012).

First, the reactionary displacement of responsibility for economic decline from government and the market to education introduced a *discourse of derision* (Ball 1990, in Unwin 2003: 4), which blamed institutions, teachers and their methods, learners, school-leavers and the unemployed for the UK's economic decline in the wake of the 1970s oil crisis. Second, the marketisation of education resulted in a destructive cycle of competition as learners became consumers, and industry partners and other stakeholders became clients. To some extent, South Africa has experienced similar repercussions as public funding for education institutions has been reduced or linked to performance indicators. In a marketised education system, then, being responsive means colleges are under pressure to have access to current labour market information and to be able to innovate curricula constantly (Unwin 2003).

This is a challenge to which the Australian college sector rose in the 1990s as forces of marketisation took hold. Research into market trends and the development of a 'self-reflective organisational capacity' (2003: 7) helped the autonomous VET colleges to track their own work processes, their market niche and the potential for innovation and growth. Instead of channeling energy and resources into intra-college competitiveness, research and innovation became central drivers of responsiveness.

Marketisation is not the only challenge. Unwin (2003: 7) argues that, to become responsive in an organic and dynamic way 'makes demands at every level of the further education sector', both for institutions and their staff, and learners. Staff need to be supported to negotiate change. Assumptions about what learners want, need and are able to do must be interrogated. The identities of lecturers and learners, as members of unique and differentiated communities with particular histories, needs to be factored in. And, crucially, that the demand for skills from industry may move in different and unpredictable directions from that envisaged at state level, needs to be remembered. Gathering and using

data of this nature poses a significant challenge to colleges wanting to be responsive.

Writing in 2003, Unwin, drawing on Gewer (2002), commented that, to achieve the envisioned success as agents of development and growth, colleges in South Africa would need to be steered by senior staff and managers with high levels of leadership ability and effective councils. Ten years later, FET colleges in several provinces are under administration in the wake of inept governance and corruption. The sector continues to struggle to stabilise in the wake of waves of reforms (Wedekind 2013). There is a growing call for research into the FET sector, pointing to the need for an informed account of the structural, systemic fragmentation and disjuncture that continue to plague this crucial yet hybrid dimension of the education system. The situation was anticipated a decade ago in the work of Unwin, McGrath and others who cautioned that a flexible, articulated response to the multi-dimensionality of the system was needed (McGrath 2003).

Returning to the debates, more recently, Young (2008) presents a useful analysis of the structural complexity of the vocational education sector. First, it is intertwined with social differentiation and inequality along class and racial lines. In South Africa, these differences are still suffused with deep-seated passions that could push the overall system in unpredictable ways. Second, Young points to intrinsic changes in vocational education: it has shifted from being a mix of part-time employment and training to being full-time education before formal employment begins (Young 2008: 176). Third, vocational education has a two-fold purpose: to equip people with knowledge and skills to enter an initial occupation or profession; *and* to enable them to progress to higher education and/or different occupations (cf. Fuller & Unwin 2012). The increasing duality of vocational education reflects trends related to the decline of traditional occupations, sophisticated mechanisation of work processes, an increase in knowledge work, the emergence of completely new occupations, the so-called boundary-less career, globalised outsourcing, the volatility of the international economy and likely a multitude of other factors.

The literature is characterised by a reiteration of the complexity of the terrain and the difficulty of formulating a comprehensive and coherent account of how higher education institutions can respond to regional, national and global dynamics. Within this multiplicity are people, moving with differing degrees of freedom and/or constraint, interacting in dynamic and complicated ways as they attempt to take or give within the system. Of these, teachers are often the focus of scrutiny and criticism. In outlining how vocational education has changed, and is tasked with responding to many competing demands, Young (2008) concludes with a salutary reminder of the extent to which the degree and types of specialisation expected of FET educators has intensified and expanded. FET college lecturers have recently become the focus of several studies which, however, it is not within the scope of this paper to review (Akoojee 2008; Wedekind 2010; Wedekind et al. 2011; Wedekind & Watson 2012). The next section summarises the central contestations of the function and purpose of universities.

## Universities

South African and international literature on the role and current state of universities reflects an array of tensions and conflicts. One view is that the aims of universities will naturally differ between countries. Another is that there should be a fundamental set of objectives by which universities, as a distinct yet globally inter-connected sector of HE, should be defined. And to preserve these objectives, pressures exerted on universities as a result of shifts in the relationship between government and higher education need to be managed (McKenna 2013). How this might be accomplished is a difficult undertaking and speaks to the purpose and aims of the DHET's Labour Market Intelligence Project (LMIP)<sup>8</sup>.

McKenna goes on to outline three fundamental ideological issues: first, whether university education is for an elite minority or for the masses; second, whether universities should be oriented toward serving public or private good; and third, whether social development or economic growth should be the motivating impetus for universities' functioning (Walker & Boni 2013: 1). McKenna (2013: 1) locates

these debates within the 'global capture of higher education by economic arguments and neo-liberal policy' (McKenna 2013: 1). Regarding the so-called marketisation of HE, Wedekind's (2013, personal communication) view is that in South Africa, and arguably elsewhere in the world, severe cuts in state funding have forced universities to embrace a business-model of operation – or face bankruptcy. This reflects a system of forces at play in local and global economic policies, ideologies and pressures in which universities are implicated.

Walker and Boni (2013: 15–16) provide comprehensive references to a body of literature critiquing several issues in the wider debate: the state of HE generally; transformation of universities; promoting public good; the stratification of HE along socio-economic lines; and social redress. Unterhalter and Carpentier's (in Walker & Boni 2013) formulation of global inequalities is worth a brief elaboration. Instead of accounting for inequalities in binary terms – commodification of knowledge versus critical knowledge, for example – they contend that there are four dimensions that need to be considered, that the situation is a *tetralemma*. So, inequalities in HE emerge from interaction between: 1) economic growth; 2) equity; 3) democracy; and 4) sustainability. This model resonates with the complexities of the South African situation.

Both McKenna and Walker and Boni point to the difficulties universities encounter in responding to multidimensional complexities. The call to 'simultaneously attend to multiple aims' (McKenna 2013) and challenges becomes problematic when, as Walker and Boni (2013: 16) contend, 'each influences and reinforces at least one other problem'. For example, where HEIs are seen as the key to economic growth, enhanced job prospects and social upliftment through their role in human capital development, not only is human flourishing (Sen 1993; Nussbaum 1993) as a distinct goal of education obscured, but within the human capital approach, public funding is withdrawn and HEIs become subject to market forces (Walker & Boni 2013: 17–18).

Layered beneath such high-level debates are specific contentions. One example is the

displacement of knowledge from the curriculum as a consequence of ideologically driven reforms to educational practice in tandem with global and regional socio-economic pressures (Barnett 2004; Habib 2013; Harley & Wedekind 2004; Hugo 2012; Kraak 2002; Wheelahan 2010; Winch 1998; Young 2008). Accompanying this trend has been an intensification of perceptions around so-called generic skills for enhancing employability. Harvey et al. contend that in the UK, employers value generic skills more than specialised disciplinary knowledge and skills (in Yorke et al. 2006).

Debates about types and kinds of knowledge and skill are further implicated in the overall conception of the role universities are called to play. It is not within the scope of this paper, however, to elaborate on these. This will be explored further in paper 2. Maintaining the centrality of disciplinary knowledge and occupation-specific training acts as a balancing theoretical lens to the philosophical framing of the overall proposition of an expanded view of employability and curriculum responsiveness. The reader is referred to the work of, amongst others,

Andre Kraak, Jeanne Gamble, Johann Mouton, Johan Muller, Ursula Hoadley, Wayne Hugo and Felix Rauner for further discussion on the importance of disciplinary knowledge and knowledge types.

In South Africa, our universities and universities of technology are not exempt from the pressures and dilemmas reflected in the literature. Moreover, recognising that knowledge production and dissemination is caught up in the social-informational assemblage (SIA) (Watson 2012) further destabilises the extent to which universities have a monopoly on knowledge production (South African Government 2011). In this milieu, the ways in which curricula might be responsive are complicated.

The challenge is to discern key stimuli in the system as a whole, and to forge a response strategy that aligns with the ongoing work of transforming the lives of the majority of South Africa's people. Universities need to find a way to equip people with knowledge and skills that enable them to thrive 'in a society in constant change' (South African Government 2011: 274).

# CONCLUSION

Employability as a construct is widely used, and possibly abused, in studies from many different disciplines. Competing ideologies and paradigms pervade the discourse. The term is recruited for use by actors in government, industry and labour, who might or might not have purposes and agendas that align with each other. The rhetoric is characterised by a sometimes imprecise usage of terms resulting in an oversimplification of the conceptual landscape. Assumptions abound. This review aimed to explore and expose existing conflicts and tensions and to open new perspectives. Education is the primary means by which people in communities should be enabled to enhance their and their fellow citizens' lives, not just their employability. A critical reading of the literature on curriculum responsiveness and employability from the perspective of education as a transformational human good reveals new analytical possibilities. However, there is a plethora of studies from different disciplines. In no way does this present discussion claim to be a complete representation of the entire range of debates. But it points to some directions for future in-depth meta-analyses of key themes both within and across different theoretical and empirical domains.

However, key points were covered. Employability as a *project of the self* is contested as convoluted, if not insidiously prejudicial against people attaining the levels of employability and work satisfaction that would give them quality of life. The basis for continuing skills development in a putative new world of work is questioned. Possibly, calls for upskilling and responsiveness reflect state and corporate control of the work-force rather than a disinterested desire to enhance the career opportunities of people. Contradictions and inequalities in the nature of the new psychological contract are scrutinised, and again, workers are shown to be disadvantaged. Issues pertaining to

peoples' identification with specific occupations, or the absence of identification with collectives, are shown to be linked to workers' perceptions of agency and social mobility as complex aspects of employability. Conversely, self-efficacy theory is shown to be a problematic feature of conventional interpretations of employability, particularly in the absence of extensive empirical evidence that can predict future skills needs. Based on studies in the UK, systemic barriers to employability were highlighted as warranting further, in-depth exploration and inclusion into the debate. Linked to this, job insecurity is also suggested for incorporation into an expanded understanding of employability: it is implicated with barriers to employability and corporate responsibility, as well as the failure of E&T institutions to provide relevant, high quality education.

Shifting away from critique, a brief bridging section introduced an expanded view of employability by outlining McQuaid and Lindsay's *interactive framework* in which individual and external factors are shown to interact with each other and with personal circumstances, to provide contextual richness for understanding employability. As a central contextual feature, the role of post-school E&Ts in South Africa is presented as destabilised by continual reform and restructuring. Complicating this is the contested function and objectives of education institutions in relation to the skills needs of the country juxtaposed with the personalised benefits of education and training. The lack of articulation between FE and HE is a major concern. Within the FE sector, many problems persist that prevent the colleges from fulfilling their function as technical and vocational training institutions. And their multidimensional role as the adaptive layer in the education system also complicates the situation. Hence, their capacity to be responsive even to

government-mandated curricula and policy initiatives is compromised. Universities are similarly plagued by fundamental tensions and conflicts centring on differences in ideology and primary purpose.

Employability is a multifaceted complexity implicated in many disciplines. Ideally, a thorough review of the literature would take the form of a series of focused papers. For example, separate surveys could have been conducted exclusively on FET colleges. A focused distinction in the literature between research and comprehensive universities might have been made. And, further inquiry is needed into literature that explores apprenticeships, learnerships and

graduate programmes as features of the post-school landscape. Linked to this, specific research focused on industry–education partnerships and the role of mentoring would also add rigour to a review on employability and responsiveness. As a final example of the kind of depth that could be aimed for in a comprehensive review, a survey of studies in the political dimensions of the relationship between education, labour and industry would likely yield insights relevant to the South African context.

Finally, this study is theoretically constrained by the exclusion of the functions performed by basic education in attaining high levels of employability.

## ENDNOTES

1. For example, see [http://www.skillsportal.co.za/page/training/training\\_companies/index](http://www.skillsportal.co.za/page/training/training_companies/index) and <http://www.skillsportal.co.za/train/courses/monthly/4-gauteng>
2. <http://www.skillsportal.co.za/page/human-resource/1611729-Creating-value-through-people-strategies-and-capability#.Ufo8EpJmim4>
3. <http://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/ConsultativeConference1999.pdf>
4. <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=196861>
5. [http://www.che.ac.za/media\\_and\\_publications/research/proposal-undergraduate-curriculum-reform-south-africa-case-flexible](http://www.che.ac.za/media_and_publications/research/proposal-undergraduate-curriculum-reform-south-africa-case-flexible)
6. <http://www.cbn.co.za/dailynews/6854.html>
7. <http://www.cbn.co.za/dailynews/6854.html>
8. [http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-areas/Research\\_Areas\\_ESD/LMIP](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-areas/Research_Areas_ESD/LMIP)

# REFERENCES

- Akoojee S (2008) FET college lecturers: The devolving link in the South African skills development equation. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 60(3): 297–313
- Allais S & Nathan O (2012) *Jobs? What jobs? Skills? What skills? An overview of studies examining relationships between education and training and labour markets*. Cape Town: HSRC Press
- Barnett R (2004) Learning for an unknown future. *Higher Education Research and Development* 23(3): 247–260
- Brown P, Hesketh A & Williams S (2002) *Employability in a knowledge-driven economy*. Cardiff: Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences
- Collin K, Van der Heijden B & Lewis P (2012) Continuing Professional Development. *International Journal of Training and Development* 16(3): 155–163
- Cosser M, McGrath S, Badroodien A & Maja B (eds) (2003) *Technical college responsiveness: Learner destinations and labour market environments in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press
- DeLanda M (2002) *Intensive science and virtual philosophy*. London: Continuum
- DeLanda M (2006) *A new philosophy of society: Assemblage theory and social complexity*. London: Continuum
- Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET] (2013) *White Paper for post-school education and training*. Pretoria: DHET
- Fugate M & Kinicki AJ (2008) A dispositional approach to employability: Development of a measure and test of implications for employee reactions to organisational change. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 81: 503–527
- Fugate M, Kinicki AJ & Ashforth BE (2004) Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 65: 14–38
- Fuller A & Unwin L (2012) *Banging on the door of the university: The complexities of progression from apprenticeship and other vocational programmes in England*. Cardiff: SKOPE
- Green A (2002) The Many Faces of Lifelong Learning: Recent Education Policy Trends in Europe. *Journal of Educational Policy* 17(6): 611–626
- Green F (2013) *Skills and skilled work: An economic and social analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Habib A (2013) *Reflections of a university bureaucrat interested in advancing a progressive social agenda*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education
- Hallier J (2009) Rhetoric but whose reality? The influence of employability messages on employee mobility tactics and work group identification. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 20(4): 846–868
- Harley K & Wedekind V (2004) Political change, curriculum change and social formation, 1990–2002. In: L Chisholm (ed.) *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Pretoria and London: HSRC Press and ZED Books. pp. 195–220
- Houston D (2005) Employability, skills mismatch and spatial mismatch in metropolitan labour markets. *Urban Studies* 42(2): 221–243
- Hugo W (2012) Specialised knowledge and professional judgement in teacher education: An address to teacher educators in South Africa. Pretoria
- Knight P T & Yorke M (2008) Employability through the curriculum. *Tertiary Education & Management* 8(4): 261–276
- Kraak A (ed.) (2000) *Changing modes: New knowledge production and its implications for*



- higher education in South Africa. Cape Town: HSRC
- Kraak A (2012) *Differentiation in the post-school sector*. Cape Town: HSRC
- Kruss G (2005) *Working partnerships in higher education in industry and innovation*. Cape Town: HSRC Press
- Lindsay C, McQuaid R W & Dutton M (2007) New approaches to employability in the UK: Combining 'Human Capital Development' and 'Work First Strategies'. *Journal of Social Policy* 36(4): 539–560
- McGrath S (2003) Building college responsiveness in South Africa. In: M Cosser, S McGrath, A Badroodien & B Maja (eds) *Technical college responsiveness: Learner destinations and labour market environments in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press
- McGrath S (2009) *What is employability? Learning to support employability project paper 1*. Nottingham: University of Nottingham
- McGrath S (2012) Vocational education and training for development: A policy in need of a theory? *International Journal of Educational Development* 32(2012): 623–631
- McKenna S (2013) Introduction. *Kagisano: The aims of higher education* 9: 1–4
- McQuaid R W & Lindsay C (2005) The concept of employability. *Urban Studies* 42(2): 197–219
- Nussbaum M (1993) Non-relative virtues: An Aristotelian approach. In: M Nussbaum & A Sen (eds) *The Quality of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 242–269
- Potgieter I & Coetzee M (2013) Employability attributes and personality preferences of postgraduate business management students. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 39(1): 1–10
- Rauner F (2007) Vocational Education and Training - A European Perspective. In: A Brown, S Kirpal & F Rauner (eds) *Identities at work*. Dordrecht: Springer. pp. 115–144
- Schultz T W (1961) Investment in human capital. *American Economic Review* 51(1): 1–17
- Selden S (2004) The neo-conservative assault on the undergraduate curriculum. In: M Walker & J Nixon (eds) *Reclaiming universities from a runaway world*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. pp. 51–66
- Sen A (1993) Capability and well-being. In: M Nussbaum & A Sen (eds) *The Quality of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 30–53
- Sok J, Blomme R & Tromp D (2013) The use of the psychological contract to explain self-perceived employability. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 34: 274–284
- South African Government (2011) *National Development Plan 2030*. Available at: <http://www.npconline.co.za/medialib/downloads/home/NPC%20National%20Development%20Plan%20Vision%202030%20-lo-res.pdf> [accessed 14 May 2013]
- Unwin L (2003) Being responsive: Colleges, communities and stakeholders. In: M Cosser, S McGrath, A Badroodien & B Maja (eds) *Technical college responsiveness: Learner destinations and labour market environments in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press
- Van Der Heijde CM & Van Der Heijden BI (2006) A competence-based and multidimensional operationalization and measurement of employability. *Human Resource Management* 45(3): 449–476
- Walker M (2003) Framing social justice in education: What does the 'capabilities' approach offer? *British Journal of Educational Studies* 51(2): 168–187
- Walker M & Boni A (2013) Higher education and human development: Towards the public and social good. In: *Human development and capabilities*. Oxford: Routledge. pp. 15–29
- Wang L (2013) Capabilities and widening access to higher education: A case study of social exclusion and inequality in China. In: A Boni & M Walker (eds) *Human development and capabilities*. Abingdon: Routledge. pp. 97–112
- Watson A (2012) Reconceptualising adolescent literacies as textual assemblages. Pietermaritzburg: University of Kwazulu-Natal, Doctoral thesis. Available at <http://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/xmlui/handle/10413/9130>
- Wedekind V (2010) Chaos or coherence? Further Education and Training College governance in post-apartheid South Africa. *Research in International and Comparative Education* 5(3): 302–315
- Wedekind V (2013) FET Colleges, employability, responsiveness, and the role of education.



- In: S Vally & E Motala (eds) *Education, the Economy and Society*. Pretoria: UNISA Press
- Wedekind V & Watson A (2012) *Understanding complexity in the FET college system: An analysis of the demographics, qualifications, and experience of lecturers in sixteen FET colleges across Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal*. Pietermaritzburg: UKZN
- Wedekind V, Watson A & Buthelezi Z (2011) *Lecturers in distress*. Pietermaritzburg: UKZN
- Wheelahan L (2010) *Why knowledge matters in curriculum*. London: Routledge
- Winch C (1998) *The Philosophy of Human Learning*. London: Routledge
- Wittekind A, Raeder S & Grote G (2010) A longitudinal study of determinants of perceived employability. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour* 31(4): 566–586
- Yorke M, Knight P, Moreland N & Little B (2006) *Employability in higher education: What it is – what it is not*. Learning and Employability Series 1. York: The Higher Education Academy
- Young M F D (2008) *Bringing knowledge back in: From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education*. Oxford: Routledge