

Employability: A (vocational) pedagogy for work in the 21st century



A paper on behalf of the Association of
Private Providers of Education, Training in
Development (APPETD)

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Overview

- The changing nature of work: ‘machines are coming to take our jobs’...
- The future workplace and work
- The meaning of ‘employability’ for the future
- A ‘vocational’ pedagogy – what is the difference?
- A pedagogy for work
- Signature pedagogies
- A taxonomy of vocational pedagogy
- So, what is a vocational pedagogy for work?
- References



The changing nature of work: ‘machines are coming to take our jobs’...

“We know that **robots are taking over** thousands of routine tasks and will eliminate many low-skill jobs in advanced economies and developing countries. At the same time, **technology is creating opportunities**, paving the way for new and altered jobs, increasing productivity, and improving the delivery of public services. When we consider the scope of the challenge to **prepare for the future of work**, it is important to understand that many children currently in primary school will work in jobs as adults that do not even exist today” (World Development Report, 2019, World Bank Group)

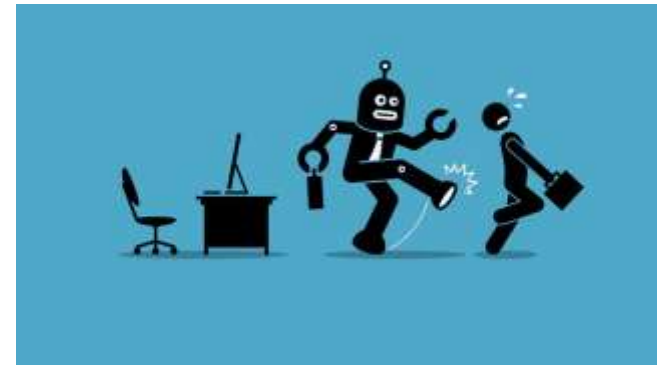


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- Since **industrialisation**, this has been the fear
- Future challenges ‘resist simple and prescriptive solutions’ (WBG, 2019)
- To meet these challenges we are going to need:
 - **a combination of technological know-how, problem-solving, and critical thinking, as well as soft skills such as perseverance, collaboration, and empathy**
- What does the future workplace look like? What does it mean for the 2 billion people working in the informal sector?

The future workplace and future jobs

- A **gig economy**: contract workers for short-term engagements
 - No single lifelong job



- Manufacturing jobs are lost to **automation**:
 - The developed world is de-industrializing, while developing countries are becoming more industrialized: '[developing] countries have upgraded their human capital, bringing highly skilled young workers into the labor market, who, together with new technology, upgrade manufacturing production' (WBG, 2019).

The future workplace and future jobs

- **Technology changes the demand for skills:**
 - Since 2001, the share of employment in occupations heavy in non-routine cognitive and socio-behavioral skills has increased from 19 to 23 percent in emerging economies and from 33 to 41 percent in advanced economies.

Artificial Intelligence and the future of work:



- Future work will be in a **post-capitalist society**, where not the working class, but a **networked class** will hold sway
 - They will ‘use copious amounts of real data to understand, model and test ideas for change, promote collaborative, non-profit forms of work, and ensure that everyone is paid a basic income’ (Nedlac, 2019).
- The **future workplace** will be a combination of full-time work producing goods and services, and work via platforms, projects, gigs, and tours of duty (Nedlac, 2019).

The meaning of 'employability' for the future

- The 4th industrial revolution has 'the potential to create new high-quality jobs, and to vastly improve job quality and the productivity of human employees' (Nedlac, 2019)
- Are our young people ready for these opportunities?

Workplace requirements		
1. Leadership	7. Initiative	13. Detail-orientated
2. Work in a team	8. Analytical skills	14. Organisational skills
3. Communication (write)	9. Flexibility/ adaptability	15. Friendly
4. Problem-solving	10. Technical skills	16. Strategic planning
5. Communication (oral)	11. Interpersonal skills	17. Creativity
6. Work ethic	12. Computer skills	18. Tactfulness
		19. Entrepreneurial skills

- A pedagogy for 'employability'? For 'graduateness'?
- A vocational pedagogy?

A vocational pedagogy – what is the difference?

- What is different from other pedagogies?
- Learning through work:
 - ‘Institutional and disciplinary knowledge and education on the one hand and workplace-based knowledge and education on the other hand are not just different, they exist in a **hierarchical relationship** to each other’ (Umalusi, in Blom, 2006)
 - **Caricatures** of institutional education and workplace learning (Raffe, 2005)
 - A holistic curriculum which **draws on the best of both** and not on the incommensurability of the two (Blom, 2006)
 - A ‘relationships between the human and social processes of learning and working’ (Vygotsky, in Evans, 2011)



A vocational pedagogy – what is the difference?

- A pedagogy to enhance employability:
 - Employability is seen to be ‘having **an effective mix of skills, attributes and attitudes** to function successfully in required roles’.



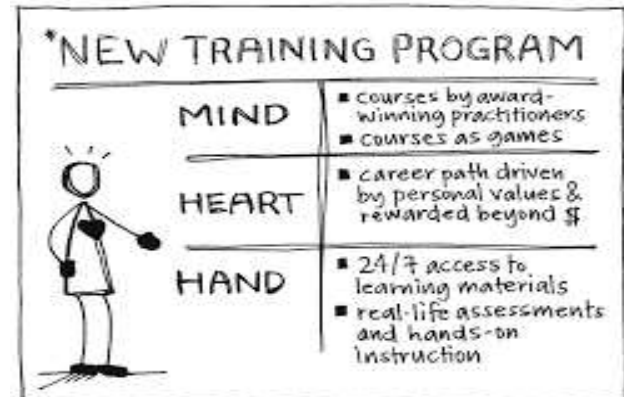
- A pedagogy to enhance ‘graduateness’:
 - ‘Learning that **outlasts disciplinary contexts** and results in students who are prepared for the future work contexts’ (Blom, 2016).

A pedagogy for work

- **What is work?**
- **‘Work’ is most often equated to ‘employment’.**
 - **Utilitarian – a means to survive or subsist**
 - **A psychological incentive – an expression of creativity**
 - **A ‘calling’ – spiritual ideas**
 - **A social obligation - maintain an identity, solidarity and cohesion**
 - **A conventional mechanism of distribution**
- **Furthermore, ‘work’ (and workplaces) cannot be seen to be static (Blom, 2016)**
- **‘As work changes, so does the shape and form of its supporting pedagogy’ (Gamble, 2012)**
- **‘Vocational pedagogy therefore needs to be cognisant of the nature of work and how people learn in, from and through work’ (Blom, 2016)**

Signature pedagogies

- ‘Vocational pedagogy enables us to develop **models and tools** that can help TVET teachers more effectively to match teaching and learning methods to the needs of their students and their contexts’ (Lucas, 2014).
- A **signature pedagogy** involves: ‘types of teaching that best match the fundamental ways in which any one vocational group thinks and acts’ (Shulman, 2005).
- ‘Signature pedagogies make a difference. They **form habits** of the **mind**, habits of the **hand** and habits of the **heart**...they prefigure the culture of professional work and provide the early socialisation into the practices and values of the field. Whether in a lecture hall or lab, in a design studio or a clinical setting, the way we teach will shape how professionals behave...’ (Shulman, 2005).



A taxonomy for vocational pedagogy

- Pedagogical approaches in relation to (Lucas, 2014):

Work with **physical materials**

(e.g. bricklaying, plumbing, hairdressing)

Work with

people

(e.g. financial advice, nursing, hospitality, retail and care industries);



Work with **symbols** (e.g. accountancy, software development, graphic design).

A taxonomy for vocational pedagogy

- Working with **physical materials** pedagogy:
 - Tell me, show me, involve me
 - Theoretical learning relevant to construction; plumbing; hairdressing
 - Demonstrate skill in building; plumbing; hairdressing
 - Practice: build; plumb; style hair
- Working with **people**:
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Theoretical learning relevant to financial advice, nursing, hospitality, retail
 - Role play interpersonal skills: listening; communication; empathy; tone, etc.
 - Practice: provide advice; care for patients; serve customers
- Working with **symbols**:
 - Problem-based learning
 - Theoretical learning relevant to accounting; software development; graphic design
 - Case studies; build an app; design graphics for a publication
 - Practice: do the books for a client; build an app to solve a problem; design graphics for a client

So, what is a vocational pedagogy for work?

- TVET colleges lecturers have a **dual identity**
 - Professional educator and industry/business specialist
- Teach a curriculum that **'faces both ways'** (Barnett, 2006)
 - Prepares students in terms of **general, as well as workplace-based** competencies
- Integrates **theory and practice**
- Teach the **'language'** of the field
- Practical **problem-solving** approaches in authentic situations
- **'Work' is the curriculum**
- Mixed ages; mixed levels in one class
 - Sociological issues
- A mix of different forms of knowledge
 - **Conceptual and procedural** (Gamble, 2006)
- Knowledge is gained by **'doing the job'** – learning through work
- **A pedagogy for work**

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Questions?

Thank you!

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