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| Transcription: | 3 |
| Date: | 29 April 2024 |
| Participant: | C |
| Researcher: | Elizna Grobler |

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| Researcher: | Good day. Um, thank you so much for spending your time conducting this interview with me. I am Elizna Grobler. I am in the HR profession, and I'm also currently doing my master's degree. So the reason for this study pertains to work integrated learning. I will however, just give you a brief introduction as to what work integrating, work integrated learning is before we continue. Okay, so basically to just define it in short terms, it is a learning approach whereby students are provided with an opportunity to extend and exert their theoretical knowledge obtained in an academic setting within a professional working environment. So basic examples of work integrated learning refers to on campus and off campus activities and often take place in the form of internship, work placements, practicums, project based learning as well as service learning. So basically today I would just like to find out about your experience with your practicum. So basically, I'm just going to ask you a few questions around your practicum. And should there be an instance where you do not want to answer any specific question, you're allowed to indicate that.  Okay, thank you so much. So, my first question would be, just hold on. So describe what your practicum module in your studies were last year. |
| Participant C: | Okay, so we had a labour relations module. Where we had a practical element and then we had a more HR subject that we also had a practical element and so there were two subjects. |
| Researcher: | Okay. |
| Participant C: | That we had. Yeah, I would not say that we had much experience. The practical part of it even though they mentioned that it was a practicum. I think with the Labour Relations when we went to the CCMA once. We did some negotiations and you know, wage negotiations in class and for example, a more union type of thing as well. But that was not very useful at all. Since we didn't have any idea how to approach to but yet we had to argue in class about, you know, the wage negotiations, and we have no idea what that is in practicum, relevant practical applications. So I don't feel that it added any value because I'm asked to do something, practically, but I haven't even learned what that is in the first place. So none of the theoretical knowledge was applicable to that. |
| Researcher: | Okay. Okay. And in terms of the practicum, you had, I believe, that was the module presented by Mr. [Name and Surname]. So, if you can just explain a bit what you had to do in that subject and what was required of you to do? |
| Participant C: | Yeah, so we had a few assignments that we had to do. Yeah, no, that was a very enjoyable subject. I really enjoyed it. I learned a lot. But I do feel that the practical elements of that was lacking. I would love to see a little bit more what's going on in the industry so that when I walk out of my studies, then I can immediately start working and know exactly what's going on. But my experience was the opposite of that, where, you know, none of the things I learned I could actually practically apply in the workplace. Well, I won't say none of it, but I mean, the majority of it, I feel wasn't necessary for me to enter the workplace. So yeah, no, I think that could definitely improve. |
| Researcher: | Okay. And in terms of the practicum, you had, were you expected to schedule interviews with industry professionals, or what was the study outcomes of this practicum? |
| Participant C: | Yeah, so we had some interviews that we did with people in the industry. The one women I interviewed was actually very interesting. We did stuff more about like, you know, the AI revolution you know, and all these automatic applicant tracking systems and things like that. But it was all so advanced that it doesn't really apply to the day to day, right. We want to take HR, you know, so far ahead, but we haven't even done the basic elements of it. So ya know, I think that yeah, so all of the things that she mentioned in the interview was very interesting. You know, for example, I try and analytics. We learned a little bit about that. But none of it was was stuff that I can practically apply. Even now in my profession, the HR analytics and all of these applicant tracking systems and things it's, it's quite far away. |
| Researcher: | Okay. And in terms of your practicum were there only 1 lady You had to interview? And what was the purpose of the interview for your for an assignment or how did you use that knowledge? |
| Participant C: | Yeah, so I think if I could remember correctly, they were three assignments. But it was extremely difficult to get people in the industry that you can interview and I feel like a lot of the students that I was with, struggled very hard to find someone because there's no value whatsoever for the person in the industry to talk to someone, spend an hour with them. And they don't see any value out of it. I think you have maybe the same experience with your research project projects, and I think research projects in general is that the people don't see the immediate value to them. So they just decided not to participate. So luckily, I had a connection that I could talk to you. So I use it for all three of the interviews. But a lot of my fellow students they would finally get someone that is interested they would contact so many people and then they'll just get ghosted, so that was not good. |
| Researcher: | Okay, I hear you and if you think about the practicum specifically, did it allow you to combine your academic knowledge with practice? |
| Participant C: | Probably in a way but I don't. It was no, not so apparent that I could see it really. Yeah, so So the practical elements it was not. I don't know it wasn't that much linked with with the theory and things we did and then the practicals now that I've started working, it's the practicals that we sort of like did is not applicable to the world of work. So yeah. |
| Researcher: | Okay. And in any sense, what skills or competencies Have you acquired whilst conducting your practicum? |
| Participant C: | Well, I learned how to interview people. |
| Researcher: | Okay. |
| Participant C: | So from well not interview in the sense of interviewing candidates for job position interviewing in the sense of gathering information. So for example, my first interview that I did with the lady, um, you know, my questions were extremely long, double barreled, you know, all the mistakes you can basically make, and as it went on, I think at the third interview I had with her I was able to ask a lot better questions. So I gathered a little bit more information for last assignment. So that's the one skill that I've I've attained from it is how to interview another person. But otherwise then that yeah, I don't think there's there's many other skills that I would specifically attribute to those assignments. |
| Researcher: | Okay. And do you think that this practicum allowed you to engage with your community, so if I refer to community and might be other students or in a community at large other university departments or someone that's not in your specific frame of reference? |
| Participant C: | I would not say that no, because well, community in the sense of fellow students we in anyway, anyway, we talked, you know, day to day basis, so it's not that we talk more, just because of that specific subject, but you know, we communicated relatively well between one another. With the industry. As I've said, a lot of my fellow students wasn't as advantaged as me in that sense that they actually knew someone in the profession that they can interview and then to actually spend the time on them so they really struggled with that. I think it also affected their marks negatively. So, I don't know, I think it wouldn't be a great idea to if the university can get people for the students because as a student yourself, if you don't have any connections, have no network. It's very difficult to get them, but no, my network did not expand that much. Because I already knew this lady. I actually did work for them at home, and that's how I met her and things. But yeah, I think it stops there. |
| Researcher: | Okay. That's very interesting that you mentioned that because my next question was that they did allow you to engage with industry partners. But as you mentioned, that the lady you've known it was from your own network |
| Participant C: | Yeah. So yeah, it's very, it's very close because it was sort of like family, friends, but family friends from long ago and I did some work for her husband. And then, you know, she said, Oh, you know, I knew you since you were this tall and things and we talked a little bit and she asked what I'm doing. And I said, I'm studying my honours in human resource management. And she's like, oh, you know, that's exactly what I do. You know that. That's the industry I work in and that's how I you know, revive that the relationship basically. But after that, we've, we've gone for a few coffees and things like that, but I would not say that it's, that's the main reason why it expanded. |
| Researcher: | Okay. And do you believe, well you're all currently working now, but let's say at the end of your honours, would you say that you were employable after your studies? |
| Participant C: | No. |
| Researcher: | Why would you say that? |
| Participant C: | Well, if I just look at the interview that I had with the current company, I'm at, a lot of the questions that I was asked, I was not able to answer because I've never done anything like that. And I haven't even thought of it. They gave me an assignment, for example. And I've never heard or read or learned about the process. And it was about onboarding. So I haven't even heard of that process. And I'm supposed to onboard someone on how would I approach it. So now, I would not say that I was specifically employable, most of the skills. I would say the vast majority of the skills I learned I learned in my first six months at this company okay. But, yeah, in terms of skills that I learned from the university, I don't ... I think it's very little that goes over into the world of work. |
| Researcher: | Okay, and then you have touched a bit on it, but during your practicum what academic knowledge have you obtained? |
| Participant C: | Well, there was a lot of like the ethics framework of the South African board of people's practices. Our lecturer focused a lot on that. I would say that was that came in quite handy. Just to have a framework of exactly what falls under HR, what is HR about, but you can know what something is about and still don't know what the skills are. So you know, I know what software development is about. But I have no idea how to practically do it. Right. So I think in that sense, it was very helpful to know exactly Oh, you know, this is what he was going to be, you know, this is the type of things we're going to do but I mean further than that. The practical aspect to it was lacking. |
| Researcher: | Okay. And this is also another question that you have touched on a bit, but um, would you say that the practicum equips you for the world of work? |
| Participant C: | I would not say that. No, I'm just if I look, for example, at the other practicum that we do with more like the Labour Relations. I feel that just going to the CCMA once was more valuable than the entire year's worth of studies. So I learned so much more about what it is how the process looks, all those types of things, what is needed then what we did in class, what we did in class was so, I almost want to say theoretical that I can't really, okay, you know, I need to do this, but how does that practically look because there's a lot of things where it can stand on the papers like this, you know, but when you go to the CCMA, you know, you need to know the right people and you need to this and that, you know, and and you sort of need to play that game, right? And if you haven't done that you have no idea how to do it. I also went with that other lady that I interviewed, I also went with her to the CCMA once with the case that she was busy with and I would say that that also learned me so much more because she is someone that does CCMA cases. That's one of her functions as a HR person. So I could actually then asked a lot of questions, because the questions come up as you do the practicum at the CCMA. It's like, okay, this guy did this. Why did he do it? Or this person said this, and the commissioner then decided to rather than go into this route, why did he do that? Then it's a lot more, you know, when I one day end up in the CCMA, I'll know exactly how to do that process because I've seen it in the past. You know, if you only hear about it theoretically at university, you know that that's not ... |
| Researcher: | I get you. |
| Participant C: | So I would recommend at least for CCMA |
| Researcher: | Okay, and if I can trace it back to your the practicum module, would you say that module equips you for the world of work other than having soft skills in terms of interviewing skills? |
| Participant C: | Yeah, I don't know. It definitely helped me to search for information. Right. So that's, that's also a skill that's very necessary, but I think universities definitely help students with so how to find information, how to make sure it's the correct information and things like that. So I would say that that is a skill that is sort of transferable to the world of work because I mean, a lot of situations, you sit with, let's say, a health and safety thing. And then you know, you have that skill of searching for the correct information. So I think that that is a transferable skill, from the practicum that I can use in my world. |
| Researcher: | No, that is good to hear. And so we have talked a bit about what the practicum might have been lacking. But what from the practicum have you find insight, have you found as insightful? |
| Participant C: | I think I'm just gonna restate one of my previous points. You know, the focus on the South African board of people's practices. I think that's extremely important thing because HR is not seen as a, you know, important profession. It's just like, it has so many negative and negative stereotypes to it. But yes, come to this organisation and they want to make it into something that, you know, if you register with them, you know, it's a lot more professional level. You know, there's a lot more seriousness to HR, they're recruiting people, they have a lot of workshops that they're doing. So I think the focus on that was was good because you know, that's a great resource that the students can use, even though it's a little bit expensive, but a lot of times they have free webinars and things like that, but I think definitely the focus on the SABPP was a very good thing. |
| Researcher: | Okay. That's good to hear. And so basically my last question, well, one of my last questions is, what aspects of the practicum do you believe should be adjusted to align it with industry standards? |
| Participant C: | Well, I think it's human resource management. Well, a BCom Honours in human resource management and labour relations, so how does the day to day of human resource management look? Well, you have your recruiting, you have your onboarding, you have little bit health and safety, you know, all of these types of things. One of the other modules that we do I just want to bring that into this one was for example, organisational development, the person who gave the organisational development came from the industry, and she gave exactly, you know, this is how the industry works. You know, you need to manage the relationships between you know, the manager and don't hurt his feelings, right. But if you only have the theoretical things of oh, you need to tell him to improve this and you tell him to improve that and you don't have to the soft human skills as well. So there was all these tips and tricks. So I think if that can be transferred over to the practical module as well, where we get different industry leaders in that work with all of these aspects that HR is going to do on a day to day basis. For example, recruitment, you know, how do you source a good candidate, and then they'll talk to us, you know, this is the type of sites we use, you know, we use P-net or you use LinkedIn and this is how we approach candidates. This is the most successful way that we've approached candidates, some industries that are different than ours, or our onboarding process. You know, we want employees since onboarding is such an important part of HR because if a person feels welcome from the start, you know, this company actually wants to hear, they're going to stay longer, that helps retention, all of these things. So all of that would be so applicable to what we do on a day to day basis. I think, instead of focusing on, you know, all of these advanced things, you know, HR in 2030, or you know, the AI revolution in HR. It's like, okay, we can do that, but let's first do what we do on a day to day basis. And if we have that skills and have that knowledge, then we can actually move over to things that are even more going to help us I mean, the applicant tracking systems, they are great and everything, theoretically, but then when you actually look at it practically you know, it can't even get the candidates name right. You know, the candidates name is Pretoria, or things like that. So, ya know, I think instead of focusing so far in the future, let's rather focus on what HR is actually now. |
| Researcher: | To build the foundation basically? |
| Participant C: | To build a strong foundation because if you have that foundation, then you can do all those other things, you know, and see, you know, hey we can actually cut down our admin time by three, four hours a day if we start using this system, or if we start using that system. So that would be very useful. |
| Researcher: | Okay. So I have an add on question on that. So you just said that we that the actual day to day it's very important to understand that. So do you think that perhaps in the practicum, they could be like a practical of how health and safety works practically, how do you conduct a health and safety meeting perhaps, and let's say, recruitment, how to use Binet basically just a crash course. Or, for example, payroll to get a crash course in payspace or VIP. |
| Participant C: | Yeah, I think that would actually be very, very useful. I think the university could actually, you know, maybe talk to p&l. Science and say, you know, listen here, here are 30 bright students or whatever the number is, that is going to get in the industry, you know, use a chance to get them now right. So give us for example, a few three being at accounts with a contested out you know, and all of these things you know, and then they learn how the P-net system... They go out there, they say to the employees, you know, I've worked with P-net at before Can you maybe give me a P-net account? I know how to source candidates on it, so that it would benefit the university by making the students more practically skilled. |
| Researcher: | Yes. |
| Participant C: | And it would benefit the university as well because they're sending out more qualified students into the workplace. I think if one univeristy does that, it's like, no, that's the university we want because every time I hire someone, they know how to use these systems. And even if for example, some one company is actually under the other company use pay space. Those are similar systems, right? So even if I am trained in PaySPACE, you know, how to log on to employees there. It's a very easy transition to Sage 300. Instead of just not knowing anything about those two, and then jumping into one of those. So I think that would that would be a very, very good idea. |
| Researcher: | Okay. And as you were talking, I also thought about another question. So you know, the IOP students before they become a registered industrial psychologist, they have a board exam and they have an internship that they need to complete according to the health proficiency Council of South Africa. So from an HR perspective, we do not have any internships that allow us to get exposure to certain fields of HR, do you feel that you are missing out that you didn't have an internship? |
| Participant C: | Well, I mean, we're basically doing now in the workplace is a it's a graduate position, but it's sort of like an intern. It's similar, the same thing, you know, so a year long, let's say, I'll be an intern, but I think we can actually implement that into the honours programme, that would also be great to sort of just get like practical experience, you know, just having more access to industry leaders, because then you also build your network. |
| Researcher: | Exactly. |
| Participant C: | Right throughout the year, then you have let's say, a week that you can go shadow someone or what ever the case may be right. And then it's like, you know, I actually have a connection with this HR person, Elizna, right. And this HR person, Elizna, was like, "Yo, this is a bright student. He knows how to do all of these things practically, you know, I can just hire him off the bat", you know, so I think that would actually be a very good idea. |
| Researcher: | Okay. That's all my questions for you. Do you have anything else you would like to contribute to the topic perhaps? |
| Participant C: | I think I just want to focus on the practicum for like the Labour Relations and things like that. So one of the one of the problems that I had with that, is that okay, welcome, everyone. We're doing a wage negotiation , you three on this side. You four on that side. Here's very little information. Okay, wage negotiation? Right? And I feel that that was structured, not that well, because at the end of the day, we what we argued about was the salary number. So this person says, oh, no, the salary number is 15,000 rand for nurses, right? And the other one was, oh, no, you're not even paying us minimum wage. But we didn't have that information. So now we're arguing about what information is true or not, because we didn't get much information it was just like, "Okay, here's a wage negotiation between this and that. And the nurses say they're not getting paid enough." So there were so few information to go on. I think if they can expand that document and say, oh, you know, you know, the nurses are getting paid quite well. But then there's a counterpoint and there's all of these things. So then you have all of these, both sides of this thing. And you have things that you get that's going for you right, paying them well or they get that get good increases, and you have the things that go against them. So both sides have stuff that they can, you know, negotiate on and before that negotiation, also just looking at actual negotiations, and then you know, okay, this is how the process actually works, you know, when it's, it's specifically facilitated or mediated by someone. So then we can approach it like that because no one had any idea how these things look like. Yet we had to do it with very, very few information. So I think in the future, because then it would be a lot more. Yeah, it's a practical element because we always negotiating, but we're wage negotiating with no knowledge and no information to go on. Yes. So I think they changed that in the future that would also be a lot more useful. |
| Researcher: | No, I get that. So if I understand correctly, from the way to negotiation exposure you had, will you be able to negotiate wages with unions in the real world based on your practical exposure? |
| Participant C: | Not at all, no, they will steamroll me |
| Researcher: | I don't even think I'm prepared for them. But thank you so much. I really appreciate your time. And that's that. |
| Participant C: | Thank you very much for your time Elizna. |
| Researcher: | Just a reminder, this whole research will be kept anonymous, and your name won't be anyway and it was voluntary. I hope I did not force you to voluntary okay. No, but thank you so much, and may you have a lovely day further. |
| Participant C: | Thank you very much for you as well. |