



AN ASSESSMENT OF THE TOURISM CURRICULUM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE WIL EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of tourism in South Africa has seen tourism businesses flourish in recent years which has led to many higher educational institutions (HEIs) offering tourism qualifications to curb the growing demand for professionally educated and trained staff. The South African government has placed much emphasis on the development of tourism skills and the quality of education that students receive. Based on these crucial factors the preparedness of graduates must be addressed. One of the fundamental approaches that HEIs have implemented is the incorporation of Work Integrated Learning programmes into tourism-related qualifications. However, literature reveals that there still remains a gap between the theoretical knowledge dispensed to students by HEIs and their ability to apply industry-specific skills during their engagement with the tourism sector. The aim of this research was to assess the tourism management curriculum at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and its effect on the students Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experience. WIL plays an integral role in the tourism management qualification offered at DUT and it is necessary to assess whether the WIL component adequately aligns with the learning objectives of the tourism programme. The population comprised of graduates who were registered for the National Diploma in Tourism Management and who participated in WIL between the years 2015 to 2019. A quantitative approach was employed in this research by means of a structured online questionnaire to collect primary data. A non-probability sampling method was used to obtain a representative sample of 106 tourism management graduates. An analysis of the empirical data obtained from the questionnaires was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 26.0 software, and Excel. The key findings revealed that the tourism management curriculum offered at DUT effectively addressed various areas that pertained to the tourism industry. Furthermore, the study found the curriculum content prepared graduates with the knowledge and expertise required to fully understand the concepts and the realities of a career within the South African tourism market. Graduates indicated that the lack of technological training in tourism systems was cause for concern as these systems are crucial for the day-to-day operations of tourism businesses, the host organizations capacity to train graduates must be an area of focus as graduates use these experiential learning as a stepping stone to begin their careers in the tourism sector and finally, during WIL the assessment activities used should align with the learning objectives outlined in the curriculum. The current research made recommendations aimed at addressing the preparation phase of the tourism graduates in order to address the lack of employability skills.

DECLARATION

I, Mealine Coopasami, hereby declare that this dissertation titled: *An assessment of the tourism curriculum and its impact on the WIL experience* is my own work and has been carried out under the supervision of Dr Reshma Sucheran. I declare that this work has not been submitted for any other course or degree and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This dissertation is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Management Sciences specialising in hospitality and tourism at the Durban University of Technology.

Méaline Coopasami

27 October 2022

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Michael Donovan Kenneth, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement. Thank you for the time that you have invested in assisting me throughout my research journey and life. Your motivation and belief in me has pushed me to exceed every limitations. I am truly thankful for having you in my life. We made it. This work is also dedicated to my parents, who have always loved me unconditionally, whose good example has taught me to work hard for the things I aspire to achieve, and their words of encouragement and push for tenacity are a constant source of inspiration for me.

“Out of clutter, find Simplicity. From discord, find Harmony. In the middle of difficulty lies Opportunity.”

– Albert Einstein

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Frank Lloyd Wright once said, “*You have to go wholeheartedly into anything in order to achieve anything worth having.*” Therefore, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the following individuals who had assisted me.

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- To Dr. R Sucheran, thank you for your professional expertise, constructive comments and mentoring during the preparation of this research study. The wealth of knowledge and advice I gained from you is highly appreciated. I am extremely grateful for your support and guidance in seeing this research project through to the end and for always motivating me to do my very best, Thank you mam.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AC:	Abstract conceptualisation
AE:	Active experimentation
ARS:	Amadeus Reservation System
CATHSSETA:	Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport SETA
CCFO's:	Critical Cross- field Outcomes
CE:	Concrete experience
CHE:	Council on Higher Education
DHET:	Department of Higher Education and Training
DHBW:	Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg
DOL:	National Department of Labour
EIP:	Employability Improvement Programme
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GDS:	Global Distribution System
HEI:	Higher Education Institution
HEQSF:	Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework
HSRC:	Human Science Research Council
ICT:	Information and communication technologies
IR.4.0:	Fourth Industrial Revolution4.0
KSVAs:	Knowledge, skills, values and abilities
MICE:	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
NDT:	National Department of Tourism
NSDS:	National Skills Development Strategy
NQF:	National Qualifications Framework
PBL:	Problem-based learning
PJBL:	Project-based learning
QWL:	Quality of Work Life
RO:	Reflective observation
SAQA:	South African Qualifications Authority
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals

SWOT:	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TAFE:	Technical and Further Education institutions
TUs:	Traditional universities
TVET:	Technical Vocational Education and Training College
UoTs:	Universities of Technology
VET:	Vocational Education and Training
WDTL:	Work-directed theoretical learning
WIL:	Work Integrated Learning
WPBL:	Workplace-based learning
WPL:	Workplace learning
WPP:	Work-preparedness programme

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Throughout South Africa and around the world, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programmes have been implemented into educational institutions learning curricular, and this type of learning has rapidly evolved into a well-established practice (Engelbrecht 2017:24; Rambe 2018:2). The travel industry is seen as an engine of global economic growth and has put a great deal of pressure on educational institutions to provide well-structured programs in order to produce more skilled workers (Steynberg, Slabbert and Saayman 2002:89; Kyrylov, Hranovska, Boiko, Kwilinski and Boiko 2020:2). According to Deen and Tichaawa (2016:1-9), WIL is an instrumental component of a student's academic curricula and when implemented correctly, WIL has the capacity to positively impact student's skills, training and development within the tourism and hospitality sector (Jackson 2015:350; Rowe and Zegwaard 2017:87). WIL is seen as a tool that enables active and flexible learning in a practical setting away from the predictable classroom environment (Deen and Tichaawa 2016:9). This type of experiential learning is closely linked with the course outline and focuses on converting theoretical knowledge into practical work experiences (Kramer and Usher 2011:2; Govender and Wait 2017:49-51; Mabeba 2019:26).

Educated, well-trained, and multi-skilled graduates are highly sought-after assets in the tourism and hospitality market today (Anderson and Sanga 2019:35). The literature has indicated only a limited number of tourism graduates pursue a career in the tourism industry upon completion of their studies, and this is often due to their unfulfilled expectations of the tourism industry, meagre remuneration packages, unfavourable working conditions and a shortage of career prospects (Kramer and Usher 2011:2; Costa, Breda, Malek and Durão 2013:141; Tsangu 2017:5; Ramakrishnan and Macaveiu 2019:41). According to Bello, Kamanga and Jamu (2019:1), developing the right skillset is crucial in the tourism industry for graduates to maintain growth and to flourish in terms of achieving suitable employment. A critical challenge that educational institutions face is arranging uniquely designed learning curricula which incorporate WIL programmes and structuring specific learning outcomes that will help cultivate the students' practical knowledge and skills (Clements and Cord 2013:115; Aarons 2019:10). Govender and Waits (2017:51-52) further suggest that providing students with structured tasks, assessments and training derived from their academic learning outcomes can

add value by equipping them with relevant industry knowledge and appropriate skills. The global advancement in technology, and the shifting patterns and continuous developments within the tourism industry pose a challenge for educational institutions to yield enterprise-ready students (Mkhize 2017:5). For tourism to succeed, technological innovation is crucial. Technology is redefining the tourism industry by encouraging innovation, influencing competitiveness, and transforming business practices in tourism organisations (Buhalis 2020:267). Therefore, educational institutions must embrace WIL to promote the practical application of knowledge and technical skills in simulated work environments to adapt to the technological paradigm shift occurring in the tourism industry (Rambe 2018:2). For this reason, an investigation into the tourism management learning curricular and the integration of WIL into a student's educational experience must be explored to minimise the potential gaps (Mkhize 2017:5).

1.2 Background of the research problem

In South Africa, the local tourism industry is seen by the government as a critical contributor to addressing the high levels of unemployment. According to Van Wyk and Jacobs (2019:31), the tourism and hospitality industry supports a high employment rate within the South African economy, offering employment to 9.3% of the South African job market in 2018 and 10.1% in 2019. Zwane, du Plessis and Slabbert (2014:2) further stated that the tourism and hospitality industry progressively contributes to South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP). Moreover, the broader economic impacts are projected to increase by 4.8% per annum from R328.2 billion (11.4% of GDP) in 2011 to R522.4 billion (11.5% of GDP) by 2021. According to Jong, Soh and Puah (2022:413), as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, the South African tourism industry has only been able to generate USD24.6 billion in tourism revenue or 7.0% of South Africa's GDP in 2019 and created 1.48 million jobs, representing 9.1% of total employment, which falls short of the previously projected annual growth.

Institutions of higher education are continuously challenged to produce adequately prepared students for the working environment. These students are expected to possess the fundamental skills and practical training that will allow for an easy transition into the rapidly evolving work environment (Leong and Kavanagh 2013:1). Therefore, the South African government has continually mandated educational institutions to incorporate skills development and training within their learning curricula (Zwane *et al.* 2014:3; Govender and Wait 2017:49-51; Rivombo and Motseke 2021:813). According to Jackson (2015:350-367), students' involvement and the challenges experienced in the execution of specific tasks and duties during WIL can be

frequently accredited to poor curriculum design. This leads to a shortage of industry-specific skills and gaps in student's ability to perceptively apply their knowledge in a practical work setting. In addition to linking students with the realities of the industry, educational institutions need to comprehend the importance and value of knowledge and learning that originates from WIL (Smith and Worsfold 2015:22). Smith, Meijer and Kielly-Coleman (2010:409-419) argue that learning should not be seen as a by-product of work but rather as an essential element required for a student's seamless integration into the working realm. However, Smith and Worsfold (2015:22) state that the educational institution's academic staff does not exclusively control students' experiential learning. Yet, they are held accountable for the value students place on their experiential learning. Jugmohan (2010:34) asserts that one of the foremost issues that educational institutions encounter is the lack of collaboration between industry stakeholders and academia involved in the curriculum design, which causes a potential challenge in producing industry-ready graduates. In-depth development and implementation of the WIL curricular may inspire students to create a link between their theoretical knowledge and essential skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking and problem-solving, through improved teaching techniques during their academic phase of learning (Anderson and Sanga 2019:35; Daniels, Tichaawa and Abrahams 2022:183).

Enhancing the level of a student's knowledge and skills before their commencement of WIL may prove to be of vital importance as the industry may not be keen to engage with students that don't display these employability skills (Leong and Kavanagh 2013:1; Bhatti, Alyahya, Alshiha, Qureshi, Juhari and Aldossary 2022:3). According to Jackson, Rowbottom, Ferns and McLaren (2017:35), to retain competitiveness in a global market, economies require a highly trained labour force who are dynamic, resourceful, and suitably skilled. Therefore, educational institutions are encouraged to entrench essential skills into their curricula (Zehrer and Mössenlechner 2009:266). According to Wilmot and McKenna (2018:868) and Maphosa, Mudzielwana and Netshifhefhe (2014:359), cultivating more excellent knowledge to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving industry, developing skills and incorporating technical training into student's curriculum will assist them in improving their versatility and employability in a technologically oriented economy. Zehrer and Mössenlechner (2009:266), Anderson and Sanga (2019:34), Mínguez, Martínez-Hernandez and Yubero (2021:10032) and Bhatti *et al.* (2022:3) noted that there remains a significant gap between what educational institutions provide and the needs of the tourism industry.

The purpose of this study is to provide students with opportunities to develop professional and technological skills by exploring academic gaps within higher education. Thereby supporting their progression and advancement in becoming significant assets to the tourism industry. This may open doors of opportunity for employment and a more credible wealth of practical experience. After conducting numerous database searches, the researcher established that limited literature was available on the potential gaps in the tourism management curriculum at tertiary education institutions in South Africa. Therefore, research into the tourism management curriculum must be explored, and improvements sought to produce a high calibre of well-trained future industry leaders, which will benefit both students and the industry in the long term (Lu and Adler 2009:64; Anderson and Sanga 2019:35; Mínguez *et al.* 2021:10032). As a result, this study seeks to assess the tourism management curriculum at a University of Technology (UoT) in South Africa, for potential gaps and to evaluate its effect on students' WIL experience.

1.3 Statement of the research problem

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is an appropriate vehicle for delivering skills development and training to students in academic institutions (Rowe and Zegwaard 2017:87; Ngwane 2017:4326; Anderson and Sanga 2019:35). A persistent gap remains between the learning curricular and industry requirements, which impact a student's ability to learn during WIL (*ibid*). Literature confirms that there is a breakdown in collaborative planning, design and delivery of the tourism curriculum within the industry (Wang, Ayres and Huyton 2010:11; Jugmohan 2010:8; Ngwane 2017:4325; Zwane *et al.* 2014:4). Research further revealed that the tourism industry and educational institutions are independently driven and disjointed, resulting in a below-par tourism curriculum (Wang *et al.* 2010:11; Jugmohan 2010:8; Zwane *et al.* 2014:4; Anderson and Sanga 2019:35). Zwane *et al.* (2014:4) noted that the tourism industry stakeholders have divergent expectations relating to the tourism curricula. Zagonari (2009:3) concurs and suggests that employers do not identify the significance of tourism education; they lack appreciation of underlying beliefs, structure and theories that should guide tourism globally. While the tourism industry is focused on practical and transferable skills, educational institutions concentrate mainly on building theoretical knowledge and sustainable structures Jackson (2015:352).

According to Jackson (2015:362), successfully equipping students with generic and industry-related skills necessitates the significance of academic professionals and industry employers to

sustain a continual dialogue that will positively impact student performance. Wang *et al.* (2010:11) acknowledged that the most considerable gap observed between academics and industry experts was their opinions about the significance of subjects within the curriculum. Rook (2017:201) further suggests that establishing WIL effectively extends beyond university control, and it involves the dedication and full support from all stakeholders, including government, industry, and professional organisations. According to Brown, Thomas and Bosselmann (2015:136), undergraduates who began their experiential learning displayed a shortage of adequate knowledge and skills relating to the industry, which hindered their progression during WIL. Jackson (2015:358) indicated that the theoretical-based education of students did not adequately align with the tasks they received during WIL, specifically regarding the utilisation of technological systems and the lack of communication skills. Furthermore, many students did not fully grasp the magnitude of their work obligations and failed to complete their WIL programme (Cord, Bowrey and Clements 2011:163). The partnerships between educational institutions and industry stakeholders must form an essential component for designing a curriculum that may optimise WIL benefits for all stakeholders (Smith 2012:248; Rook 2017:201; Anderson and Sanga 2019:35). By involving industry stakeholders who are concerned with the planning, design and delivery of the tourism curricular, could prove to be beneficial in limiting the challenges that impact students during WIL (Solnet, Robinson and Cooper 2007:68).

1.4. Aim and the objectives of the study

1.4.1 Aim

This study aims to assess the tourism management curriculum at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and its effect on the WIL experience.

1.4.2 Research objectives

To investigate the research problem, the following objectives will be addressed:

- To analyse students' experience of WIL in the tourism management program.
- To examine the extent to which the tourism curriculum prepared students for WIL.
- To ascertain any gaps in the tourism curriculum concerning WIL.

1.5. Delimitations and limitations of the study

The study will be conducted at the Durban University of Technology, South Africa, which is a University of Technology offering a three-year diploma in tourism management. The study sample will comprise of graduates from the period 2015 to 2019 who have completed their

WIL training in the Tourism Management program. This study will not comprise all the tourism programmes and levels within the Department of Hospitality and Tourism (DUT) but will focus on tourism management graduates from 2015 to 2019. This sample was used for convenience and relevance of information, data collection, and cost-effectiveness.

- This study will represent tourism students from one educational institution in KZN; therefore, the results of this study may not be generalised to other settings and educational institutions.
- As this study will be conducted during 2019-2021, the sample size is determined by the number of graduates enrolled in the tourism management course from 2015 to 2019. Therefore, results may not be generalised to other enrolment contexts in other institutions.
- The study intends to gauge the impacts of the tourism curriculum on students' ability to cope during WIL. Conclusions will be based on the study's objectives and to what extent they influence students. The study does not attempt to measure students' fundamental skills and abilities or attribute specific proficiencies to the design or facilitation of a curriculum.

1.6 Outline of this dissertation

This dissertation will comprise five chapters, namely:

Chapter One: Scientific foundation of the study

This chapter introduces the reader to the study. It describes the background, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the study's objectives, the research questions, the significance of the study, a theoretical framework that guided the study and operational definitions.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter presents the literature review. It includes the various definitions and explanations of critical thinking from the experts in the field and an overview of the different didactic and contemporary teaching methodologies and their impact on critical thinking development in the knowledge, expectations and self-confidence of tourism graduates.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter focuses on the research design, study setting, study population, research instrument, the data collection process, method of data analysis and the ethical considerations that will be addressed.

Chapter Four: Data analysis

This chapter will present the data that will be analysed, the interpretation of the data and the tests used. It will also highlight the potential gaps relating to the tourism curriculum and how this impacted students during WIL.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter will present the final discussions, implications, recommendations and conclusions based on the study's findings.

1.7 Conclusion

Chapter one has set the framework on which the study will be structured. It brought to light the background and the problems that will form the focus of this study. The contextual knowledge identified a yearning to understand the effectiveness of the current tourism management curriculum and the impact it may have on students' ability to perform well during WIL. The researcher highlighted the problem statement, aims and objectives, limitations and delimitations relating to the significance of the study. Chapter two will be based on a critical review of the literature published by researchers in the field. This is done to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges associated with the tourism curriculum and its implications on students during WIL.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one presented this study's problem statement, background, aim and objectives. Also included in chapter one is the study's rationale, limitations, and structure. The literature review focuses on the development of tourism education and the importance of tourism education in South Africa and is presented in this chapter. It also highlights the significance of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in the tourism curriculum and the importance of competent human resources in the tourism industry. This chapter further reflects on learning during a graduate's theoretical and practical phases and the essential skills and knowledge graduates should acquire during their theoretical phase. Thereafter, this chapter will explore the different approaches to curriculum design and the statutory bodies that govern tourism education in South Africa. Finally, the literature focusing on the challenges of the WIL programme will be discussed.

2.2 Conceptual framework

McLeod (2017) stated that a person's learning is based on four influences that affect how they interpret information and that these influences could be categorised into four stages of a learning cycle (1) concrete experience, (2) reflective observation of the new experience, (3) abstract conceptualisation and (4) active experimentation (*ibid*). The author further suggested that educational institutions must ensure that they find the correct curricular design and implementation to impact the students learning ability positively. Manolis, Burns, Assudani and Chinta (2013:44) concur with McLeod and confirm that Kolb's learning model has an ideal instrument to guide student learning outcomes.

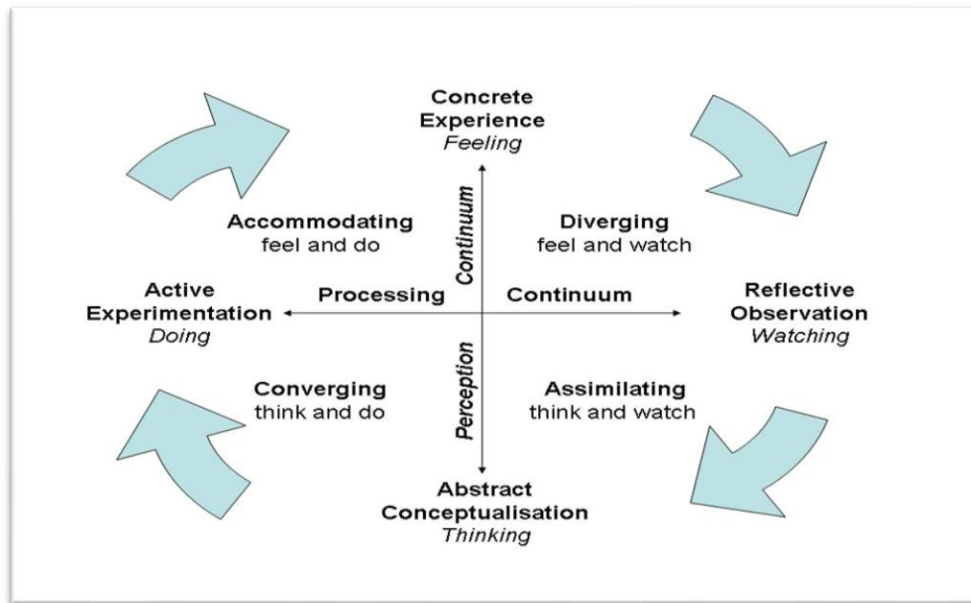


Figure 2.1: Kolb's experimental learning model for Work Integrated Learning

This research indicates that Kolb's experimental learning model (Figure 1) focuses mainly on the experimental learning phase and not entirely on the confines of theoretical-based classroom learning. Manolis *et al.* (2013:45) elaborate that learning styles combine the two individual factors. This results in four learning styles which are, diverge (CE/RO), Assimilate (AC/RO), Converge (AC/AE), and Accommodate (figure 1). The Diverging style refers to information gained through concrete experience (CE) and reflective observation (RO). This learning method is related to the student's emotional state, observational interpretations and the capacity to view different situations from their perspectives. This approach to learning entails teamwork, critical thinking, and the ability to listen well, in assisting Divergers in becoming reliable team members and sought-after leaders. The Assimilating style refers to information gained through abstract conceptualisation (AC) and develops this information through reflective observation (RO). This learning method refers to students who prefer theoretically based education instead of practical experiences. Some of the characteristics that assimilators will possess are the ability to acquire and process large volumes of data, respond well to classroom-based learning and require time for reflective thinking (*ibid*).

The Converging style refers to information gained through applying theoretical knowledge put into a practical setting. This type of learning gives preference to a student's ability to process information through active experimentation (AE), which may enhance their technical capabilities. These learners can find practical solutions to complex problems utilising their

intuition and may also depend on other individual views. Accommodating learning integrates concrete experience and active experimentation to acquire and process data. These students desire interactive participation in an authentic/natural environment and are students who adapt to this learning style and value innovative and productive encounters. Students feel content when they immerse themselves in new learning experiences and when they can find solutions to new challenges. These students are instrumental in strategically facilitating tasks and engaging in new events. These students can make a different decision based on intuition rather than logic; they choose to set objectives and be proactive team players to achieve their desired goal set for the day (Turesky and Gallagher 2011:9; Manolis *et al.* 2013:46; Dimitrova 2018:20).

According to McLeod (2017), emotions play a critical part in a student's ability to learn and comprehend concepts. Therefore, determining the willingness of students to participate in complex tasks during WIL may be beneficial to both students and industry alike, which is depicted in Kolb's model under the element of active experimentation and concrete experience (Accommodating). Evaluating students' knowledge of concepts and themes learned at the tertiary level may prove significant. This may hinder or cultivate their ability to acquire the knowledge and skills from host organisations. This element of Kolb's model is called Reflective observation and Abstract conceptualisation (Assimilating) (*ibid*). Mhkize concurs with the thoughts illustrated by McLeod regarding Kolb's model in that work-integrated learning offers students the prospect of being actively included in the actual work environment and the skills and knowledge of what they are being taught.

Chan and Ananthrjah (2019:6) suggested that due to negative experiences in the WIL programme, students' decisions and ambitions to pursue a career within the tourism and hospitality industry would be negatively impacted. It is imperative that students are correctly informed and educated about the areas of training and development that are required by industry, which must be measured (*ibid*). Campbell, Russell and Higgs (2014:23) mention that through a well-balanced course design, key learning outcomes and aims can be identified and strengthened at various levels, resulting in a productive and fruitful WIL experience. Developing an understanding of the critical needs of students creates an opportunity to align their curriculum better, which will benefit all stakeholders (*ibid*). Through the alignment of these learning outcomes, Campbell *et al.* (2014:23) argue that a student is allowed to develop and build the necessary skills and acumen required to excel against the industry's challenges.

2.3 Tourism education

Tourism is one of the most rapidly evolving disciplines in education at all levels, both in South Africa and globally (Steynberg *et al.* 2002:89). The growth of the tourism industry is seen as a mechanism to impact the global economy and has placed a great demand on institutions to provide well-structured educational programmes, to produce a more skilled workforce that will drive the success of the travel industry (Steynberg *et al.* 2002:89; Kyrylov *et al.* 2020:2). Razack (2017:5) stated that the procurement of tourism qualification that is relevant and meets industry specification is dependent on the active involvement of industry stakeholders, especially in higher education. The valuable contribution of the tourism industry may assist higher education institutions in identifying challenges relating to the quality of education offered to students and the relevance of the curriculum (*ibid*). One of the ways that higher education institutions are bridging the gap between their theoretical knowledge and transferable skills is through work-integrated learning (Fidgeon 2010:699).

2.3.1 The development and progression of tourism education

Tourism education dates back over 50 years but started to appear more frequently in higher education institutions towards the mid-1960s. It was then that tourism became embedded as a subject in universities and colleges worldwide (Airey 2016:9). Tourism education is an evolving concept in many developing countries, with the ability to reduce the gap between the tourism industry and academic training (Paudyal 2019:98). Traditionally, tourism studies were seen as trivial, insignificant, lacked credibility and was often taught under various academic fields. A turning point in tourism education was experienced in the early 1990s with the development of stand-alone tourism courses introduced in North America, the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia (McKercher and Tung 2015:306). According to Hsu, Xiao and Chen (2017:141), tourism education has evolved into four progressive stages. The industrial stage (1960s-1970s) focussed on vocational content and included business principals with a strong emphasis on extra-disciplinary knowledge. The fragmented stage (the 1980s-1990s) was governed by deliberation about the content of the curriculum. This was associated with disintegration due to challenges experienced among the applicable disciplines. During this period, various hospitality programs started to incorporate tourism and vice versa. The benchmark stage (the 2000s) identified a level of agreement concerning the comprehensive content of the hospitality and tourism programs at a degree level, entailing more philosophical and innovative development methods. Finally, the mature stage (2010 onward) is when

hospitality and tourism academics are connected with mainstream social science and higher education societies with great concern about knowledge and productive teaching methods.

Tourism establishments depend on educational institutions to develop high-calibre graduates with a broad understanding of theoretical knowledge and practical skills (Hughes, Mylonas and Benckendorff 2013:265). According to Felisitas, Molline and Clotildah (2012:13), tourism management curriculums must have the potential to develop skills in students, which is required by the industry. Hughes *et al.* (2013:265) affirm that these graduates should display critical thinking abilities, adaptability in overcoming challenging situations and a positive mindset. Mandok (2014:216) indicated that industry experts/professionals highlighted the importance of embedding transferable subjects such as marketing, leisure, business studies and economics into the design of the tourism management curriculum would provide flexibility during the work placement. However, Stansbie, Nash and Chang (2016:21) stated that practical learning is more significant than traditional learning approaches. The authors further stated that education has two essential sides: psychological and sociological. Students are more attentive to learning when they can visualise and comprehend real-world scenarios which frequently transpire outside the classroom (*ibid*). Industry experts have placed a demand on educational institutions to produce graduates that are employable and equipped with the relevant skills. This can be achieved through careful and meticulous curriculum planning and the inclusion of practical training (Felisitas *et al.* 2012:12). Wattanacharoensil (2014:13) concurs that the tourism curriculum needs to develop versatile tourism graduates who can contribute implicit value to the tourism industry. Graduates must recognise that the tourism industry is an entirely integrated system. Once understood, they will be able to meet and exceed the demands of this fast-paced sector. Wattanacharoensil (2014:13) highlights two initial stages that should be incorporated into the curriculum: philosophical and sociological analyses. The main objective of philosophical analyses is relaying valuable and meaningful education, whilst sociological analyses focus on the present society. A tourism management curriculum should develop and maintain an effective tourism society for businesses to operate and function and for all stakeholders to benefit (*ibid*).

According to Campbell *et al.* (2014:22), the early stages of a student's educational programme must aim to equip students with professional knowledge and practices relating to discipline. The latter phase of a student's educational programme must focus on constructing activities that promote a successful transition from a student's academic phase to industry engagement. Jugmohan (2010:34) confirmed that a lack of involvement from the South African tourism

industry in the planning and development of the tourism curriculum has led to a gap in students' ability to perform duties and tasks effectively. Smith and Worsfold's (2015:22) further confirmed that students' academic and experiential learning requires contributions from various stakeholders to utilise work placement effectively.

2.3.2 The link between tourism education and industry needs

Due to the unprecedented growth of tourism globally, tremendous pressure has been placed on higher education institutions to produce graduates with adequate knowledge, skills, and technical training to serve the present and future needs of the industry (Wakelin-Theron, Ukpere and Spowart 2018:1). Dwesini (2017:2) highlighted that students that have been equipped with the right set of skills and training, while simultaneously meeting their institution's academic requirements is believed to be beneficial to all stakeholders within the tourism industry. Ngwane (2017:4325) concurs with Dwesini that there is a high level of anticipation from the industry that once a student leaves the academic domain, they must be equipped with a specific set of skills required by the industry to make them employable. However, Yang, Partlow, Anand and Shukla (2014:153-154) believe that a growing number of graduates lack the fundamental skills required to meet industry expectations. Stergiou and Airey (2017:3) mention that the career opportunities for future graduates entering the tourism sector may be adversely impacted unless they can manage challenging situations within the mainstream business world. Moreover, Aarons (2019:10) asserts that a considerable gap exists between the academic curricula offered by educational institutions and industry expectations. Industry leaders encourage curriculum designers to emphasise essential modules deemed necessary (*ibid*). Therefore, Wakelin-Theron *et al.* (2018:2) emphasised the need to bridge the gap between graduates' skills and the tourism sector requirements, which is essential to graduate employability in South Africa.

For the curriculum to be operative and practical, academics need to broaden their perception of what industry requires (Alhelalat 2015:47; Pang, Wong, Leung and Coombes 2019:56). Wang *et al.* (2010:8) emphasised that an improved level of communication should be forged between tourism academics and industry experts, ensuring that the tourism curriculum applies to what industry expects from tourism graduates. Francis, Wamathai, Wanaka and Jilo (2019:95) concur that the participation of tourism industry stakeholders is vital and accentuates a cooperative relationship between academics and tourism businesses. Tourism experts should be allowed to influence the design and structure of the tourism management curriculum. Aarons (2019:16-17) suggested that the curriculum should constantly be evaluated to identify new developments within the tourism industry and to analyse students' different learning styles to

design an inclusive programme. Effective collaboration with multiple tourism stakeholders can address gaps in the tourism curriculum. Yang *et al.* (2014:153-154) and Matsoso and Benedict (2020:94) maintain that it is essential for academics to be well-informed of current industry requirements and adjust their curricula as some concepts may be outdated and irrelevant, as this will aid educational institutions to produce a curriculum that is pertinent, well-organised and focused on the future.

According to Bello *et al.* (2019:1), graduates must be equipped with the essential skills for the tourism industry to reach its maximum in creating growth and employment. Bates (2011:118) further states that students should be involved in more practical learning, and support should be offered to them by their academics to develop their experiences through self-reflection rather than just academic content. Bello *et al.* (2019:1) maintain that skills development is the critical factor that influences the growth and viability of the tourism industry. Hsu *et al.* (2017:141-142) believe that producing graduates who are well-versed, knowledgeable, and equipped with the relevant skills should be critical in the design and development of the curriculum for them to be flexible and adapt to specific roles in the workplace.

2.3.3 Education and skills training for the tourism industry

Tourism education has progressed from humble beginnings and has advanced into a widespread academic subject offered at many educational institutions worldwide. The focus of tourism programmes is to incorporate content that enhances a student's knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the tourism industry. Additionally, these programmes reflect how tourism education develops in terms of course content, level of study, and learning strategies (Fidgeon 2010:699). Ngwane (2017:4325) indicated there is a high level of anticipation from the industry and that once a student leaves the academic domain, they must be equipped with a specific set of skills required by the industry to make them employable, such as communicating effectively, displaying the ability to solve problems efficiently and portray entrepreneurial qualities. According to Tan, Baharun, Wazir, Ngelambong, Ali, Ghazali and Tarmazi (2016:417), the growth of the tourism industry and the need for proficient and competent employees have steadily increased. Therefore, Wang *et al.* (2010:8) suggest that educating, imparting, and developing skills through a more innovative approach can substantially improve the quality of the labour force in the tourism sector.

According to Razack (2017:40), in order for tourism graduates to maintain a competitive edge, the tourism pedagogy should equip students to be knowledgeable and gain transferable skills such as the ability to be self-efficient and utilise technology to analyse big data in order to operate effectively as the industry goes through a transformation. Therefore, Bello *et al.* (2019:5) suggested that generic and transferable skills must be integrated into all curriculum levels rather than entrenched in one subject component. Jackson (2015:351) further elaborated that introducing students to different teaching methods will allow them to have a well-balanced understanding of different situational scenarios and know to apply the correct skill set to resolve situational conflict effectively. However, Ibrahim (2017:16) stated that there remains an absence of critical thinking skills due to the lack of support, time constraints and limited resources, which has led to a shift between what the industry expects and what academia perceives to be the necessary skills and abilities for tourism graduates.

The tourism industry provides competitive products and services, and the recruitment of a skilled labour force is a prerequisite for the industry's success. Students who enter the tourism industry are encouraged to exhibit resourcefulness, flexibility and creativity (Bello *et al.* 2019:1). However, the tourism industry is urged to not focus solely on delivering quality products and services but to consider the human resource aspect of the industry, as the sector is customer-centred, and service orientated. Therefore, for the industry to thrive, employees need to understand the importance of customer service. The tourism industry must employ a skilled labour force that can understand the principles of providing exceptional service and always demonstrating sound business ethics (Yusuf, Samsura and Yuwono 2018:65). However, skills development is a challenging issue. If not addressed, this can impede the growth of the thriving tourism industry. It is imperative to understand that 'skilled workers' entail education accomplishment, implicit knowledge (gained through practical participation), and a specialised set of skills (Booyens 2020:4).

Table 2.1: Basic skills required by the tourism industry

Skills	Behaviours
Working effectively with others	Task collaboration, team working, cultural and diversity awareness, influencing others, social intelligence, conflict resolution
Communicating effectively	Verbal communication, public speaking, giving and receiving feedback, meeting participation, written communication
Self-awareness	Higher level of thinking and awareness, lifelong learning and career management

Thinking critically	Conceptualisation and evaluation of tasks and duties
Analysing data and using technology	Numeracy, technology, information management
Problem-solving	Reasoning, decision making, analysing and diagnosing.
Developing initiative and enterprise	Entrepreneurship, initiative, lateral thinking/ creativity, change management.
Self-management	Self-efficiency, self-regulation, stress tolerance, work/life balance
Social responsibility and accountability	Social responsibility, accountability and personal ethics
Organisational awareness	Developing professionalism, efficiency, multi-tasking

Source: Jackson (2015:356)

From the information presented in Table 2.1, each skill set is discussed in detail below and the importance of incorporating the skill set into the tourism management curriculum. Host companies acknowledged that if educational institutions merge these skills into their curricula, the graduates will be able to adapt and succeed in the workplace.

a) Thinking-critically

Globally, the higher education tourism curriculum has seen a focus on sustainable development being implemented throughout many tourism programmes. However, many of these tourism programmes fail to adequately address the critical element that affects social, economic and environmental issues. The role of universities is to provide graduates with an education that will empower them to think critically and develop into tourism practitioners who can positively impact the tourism industry (Hale and Jennings 2017:186; Cotterell, Hales, Arcodia and Ferreira 2019:882). According to Lai (2011:4), critical thinking skill has developed into an essential component of student learning. Critical thinking has become a globally recognised skill crucial for lifelong learning and career development. This allows students the ability to interpret data from the limitless information that is available and equips them with the necessary expertise to participate in the learning process with a greater understanding (Schmaltz, Jansen and Wenckowski 2017:1). Murawski (2014:27) highlighted the importance of critical thinking skills as a tool that enables students to become both authors and the critics of the new information.

b) Self-awareness

Self-awareness is considered a fundamental component of emotional intelligence and is a crucial attribute required by tourism managers and leaders. The concept of self-awareness is the ability to identify one's own emotions and how others perceive these emotions (Stoyanova-Bozhkova, Paskova and Buhalis 2020:3). Through the appropriate training and development, graduates may be able to attain success and become better-equipped leaders by implementing strategic decision-making while being able to control their emotional state of mind (Esentaş, Özbey and Güzel 2017:197). Therefore, Bobanovic and Grzinic (2019:85) suggested that educators must explore creative and innovative ways to deliver the course content in a structure that will engage and captivate the students during the learning process. Dole, Bloom and Kowalske (2016:3) state that students can develop a progressive mindset instead of a stagnant one. Through the facilitation of stimulating learning activities, students will overcome any barriers and be confident in their abilities (Razack 2017:52-53; Law and Rowe 2019:92).

One way of promoting a student's self-awareness is to cultivate an atmosphere of trust amongst students, allowing them to take risks in their pursuit to grow and nurture this skill. Another method that can be implemented is creating opportunities for students to grow through constructive criticism, thereby reinforcing the concept of self-awareness (Law and Rowe 2019:92). Stoyanova-Bozhkova *et al.* (2020:3) indicated that tourism professionals that display an increased self-awareness could contribute not only to their individual career growth effectively but may also positively impact the success of the workforce, which may ultimately lead to improved workplace performance.

c) Communicating effectively

In the twenty-first century, the dynamic changes in the workplace have led to a significant shift in the workforce, educational requirements for employees, and technological advancements. Therefore, traditional approaches to preparing students for the workforce may still be effective but less efficient. Today's most significant problem facing employers is the lack of suitable individuals to work in the current economic climate. The current workforce is experiencing a skills shortage that extends beyond a dearth of academic knowledge and practical workplace experience (Wesley, Jackson and Lee 2017:79-80). According to Kenayathulla, Ahmad and Idris (2019:99), modern-day employers have a level of expectancy regarding the employability skills prospective graduates should attain that include academic and personal skills, which should have been nurtured during their academic phase of learning. The lack of graduate

employability skills has been viewed as the missing link between academia, the training phase and the working environment (Suarta, Suwintana, Sudhana and Hariyanti 2017:337).

Historically, technical skills were the only skill set required to pursue a professional career. However, in today's employment market, technical skills are no longer deemed adequate to maintain employment, as soft skills have become increasingly critical. Despite the evolution of the modern-day workplace, employees have failed to develop interpersonal and relationship-building capabilities that will successfully facilitate effective communication and collaboration (Wesley *et al.* 2017:79-80). Khan, Mishra, Lin and Doyle (2017:1716) further suggest that the foundation of academic and workplace success is underpinned by the graduate's ability to be proficient in verbal and written communication, which contributes to workplace efficiency. Therefore, soft skills should be an integral part of most higher education curricula and a core learning component at the university level so that students gain the expertise they require to succeed in today's ever-changing workplace (Wesley *et al.* 2017:80).

d) Working effectively with others

Tourism education is critical to the development of the tourism industry. A skilled workforce with a specialised background constitutes the primary source of human capital. In today's labour market, industry specialists are in high demand. Therefore, tourism education and industry must be aligned to maximise tourism development. The role of practical learning in higher education institutions is essential for students to acquire theoretical knowledge and develop the necessary skills to thrive in a highly competitive market (Tovmasyan 2018:119). According to Schech, Kelton, Carati and Kingsmill (2017:1478), one of the vital employability attributes required of graduates in a globally connected and multi-cultural workplace is the ability to work with others which are achieved through non-technical or generic skills. The authors further highlighted that graduates in Australia struggled to work effectively with culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse people due to a lack of soft skills that were not embedded sufficiently in their curriculum (*ibid*).

In the modern-day era, progressive workplace structure has led to a shift toward evaluating soft skills and technical skills, marked by the evolution of workplace diversity, the increased use of project teams, cross-functional groups, and virtual teams being utilised within companies. It requires a heightened sense of interpersonal cognisance in a global organisation where business networks span across departments, cultures, and even time zones. Effective communication among team members is becoming increasingly crucial (Clokier and Fourie 2016:443).

However, Succi and Canovi (2020:1836) suggest that it is of vital importance that these soft skills are imparted in the graduates learning phase in order to improve the level of teamwork, combat the rapid pace of globalisation, create new avenues of dialogue in a cross-cultural setting and to retain talent in the workplace. This, in turn, will motivate and engage graduates in achieving the organisation's goals, increasing productivity, and enhancing the profitability and sustainability of the business. Thus, contributing positively to the success of the graduate's career (Clokier *et al.* 2016:443).

e) Analysing data and using technology

Technology has rapidly developed over the past few years and radically transformed our lives, our thought processes, social interactions, and lifestyle habits have evolved drastically from a few years ago. Although technology can have both positive and negative influences, the purpose of technology is to increase productivity in the workplace, enhance life, and improve the level of education (Ardiny and Khanmirza 2018:482). Technology is redefining the tourism industry by encouraging innovation, influencing competitiveness, and revolutionising business practices in tourism organisations and destinations. For organisations to adapt to the technological paradigm shift that has occurred in the tourism industry, they must strategically rethink their marketing and management approaches and improve operational procedures. Tourism is a highly competitive industry that depends significantly on technological innovation for growth (Buhalis 2020:267). Therefore, higher education institutions have had to some extent, included technical training in their curricula. (*ibid*). Including computer and internet technologies in the learning processes provides a rapid form of communication and increases the effectiveness of the learning process, thus encouraging lifelong learning (Fathema, Shannon and Ross 2015:211). Incorporating technology into education will help facilitate and improve the learning process by creating and managing appropriate technological tools (Ardiny *et al.* 2018:482). The quality of technology and its implementation in the curriculum is vital rather than the quantity of technology embedded in it (Lei 2010:456). As a result, this integration positively contributes to the student's ability to become adept at using new technologies in their future careers. Students must be prepared to adapt to new environments as business employment requirements are rapidly shifting at an accelerated rate, and learners need to be proactive in their approach if they want to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the future needs of this industry (Ardiny *et al.* 2018:482).

f) Problem-solving

In an ever-changing society, students must be actively engaged in their learning process to prepare them to overcome challenges and advance in their careers. Education is considered a key driver to any nation's success and power (Eldeen, Abumalloh, George and Aldossary 2018:961). It has been well documented that the transformations in the global labour force have shifted their focus from a graduate's academic qualification to the individual's skills. Organisations are now placing more emphasis on a new entrant's ability to demonstrate such skills as diagnosis and problem-solve, the ability to analyse and identify solutions in the modern workplace (Care, Scoular and Griffin 2016:250). The process of education helps to develop an individual's personality as well as communication abilities in becoming socially adept. The transformation process from a graduate to an employee drives social progression and facilitates a person's economic and social development (Lötter and Jacobs 2020:347-348).

A well-designed and comprehensive educational framework that will integrate industry-relevant content and practical training will enable students to meet the current demands of the tourism industry (Eldeen *et al.* 2018:961). McMurray, Dutton, McQuaid and Richard (2016:116) acknowledged that problem-solving, interpersonal communication, and customer service orientation are areas of concern. They further highlighted those businesses had identified gaps between a graduate's interpretation of the importance and performance of these skills. Employers are now seeking graduates who can excel academically, possess professional skills, and display leadership qualities within the workplace (Lötter and Jacobs 2020:347-348). Therefore, Jackson (2015:350) noted that these areas should be addressed and implemented in a graduate's curricula for them to function effectively.

g) Self-management

The rapidly evolving economic climate that modern-day businesses operate in has led organisations to seek candidates who will add a competitive edge to a highly dynamic working environment. Graduates are seen as ideal recruits as they possess the ability to work under pressure, think strategically and apply their knowledge effectively (Dhanpat, Danguru, Fetile, Kekana, Mathetha, Nhlabathi and Ruiters 2021:1). However, Gomez (2017:40) highlighted that majority of the graduates who have completed their studies, lack work experience beyond their WIL training and are unaware of the employability skills required for career growth. According to Clements and Kamau (2018:2279), graduates entering the world of work face various challenges in securing employment. The complexity and demands of the current labour market

require individuals to become self-efficient and responsible for the growth and success of their careers.

The development of self-management strategies is crucial in shaping work-life balance; it assists in elevating an individual self-motivation and facilitates behavioural changes that contribute to overall workplace performance (Jackson and Wilton 2016:268-269; Gomez 2017:40). Therefore, Dhanpat *et al.* (2021:3) further suggested that using self-management strategies is a crucial contributor to individual career development as it affords them the ability to adapt to the complexities of the working environment. The attainment of such proficiencies assists graduates to be successful within both the academic and working domain, thus positively influencing a graduate's self-development and stress tolerance (Lent, Ezeofor, Morrison, Penn and Ireland 2016:47). It is acknowledged that graduates who display good self-management skills can adapt to the training with ease, assimilate into the workplace effectively and become productive members that contribute to the growth of any organisation (Dhanpat *et al.* 2021:3).

h) Social responsibility and accountability

The primary role of educational institutions is to ensure that graduates are adequately equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to enter careers upon graduation (McGunagle and Zizka 2020:591). Globally, organisations have become mindful of the environmental and societal impact and have shifted their focus from merely wealth creation to the preservation of environmental resources and the sustainable development of the societies that may be affected by their business practice (Venske 2016:2). The competitiveness of an organisation lies within its current workforce. Thus, industry expectations have evolved concerning the skills and attributes required by new employees. Organisations now require employees to be equipped with the relevant knowledge and principles needed to enhance efficiency, competitiveness and social well-being (Barrena-Martínez, López-Fernández, Márquez-Moreno and Romero-Fernández 2015:41). The importance of industry collaboration and their input when designing an effective tourism curriculum must be considered, as this allows for the appropriate social responsibility skills to be embedded into the tourism curriculum (Venske 2016:2). However, a gap persists in the educational content that traditional institutions provide in the way they prepare graduates with the skills and knowledge to become socially responsible citizens (McGunagle and Zizka 2020:591).

Encouraging students to deal with societal issues will inspire their career development, improve self-awareness and provide them with a deeper understanding of social, cultural and ethical

values (Wearing, Tarrant, Schweinsberg, Lyons, and Stoner 2015:103). According to Liang (2021:3), an individual's role as a socially responsible citizen is to advocate for responsible interaction with societies, be concerned about operational issues and seek resolutions to these problems. Embedding relevant modules in a sustainable tourism framework that encapsulates social responsibility values, ethics, and sustainability into the curricula will provide an educational foundation for students to grow into socially responsible citizens (Fleacă 2017:405-406), thus producing graduates who portray social awareness, accountability and can operate with a higher level of integrity (Barrena-Martínez *et al.* 2015:410).

i) Developing initiative and enterprise

Entrepreneurship is primarily characterised by establishing and implementing a new business plan. Entrepreneurship is critical in anticipating, taking risks, and cultivating a culture of continuous learning and development. For these functions to be achieved, a symbiotic relationship between the suitable skill set, adequate resources, and utilising a knowledge-based strategy must be employed (Pekovic, Jovanovic, Krivokapic and Vujovic 2017:208). In the twenty-first century, an organisation's success is determined by an innovative and creative workforce (Shu, Ho and Huang 2020:2). Therefore, the core element of education should be the development of graduates for a seamless transition into the realities of the working world by instilling characteristics such as creativity, lateral and innovative thinking, productivity and the desire to succeed (Edokpolor and Somorin 2017:144-145).

An educational environment based on fostering entrepreneurial skills will encourage the development of business models resulting in establishing, growing, and preserving businesses. Entrepreneurial training programme plays a significant role in enhancing viability and desirability when building a business. Critical thinking skills such as analysing, comparing, contrasting, evaluating, and criticising are crucial to helping students develop their cognitive abilities and creativity skills such as imagination and discovery, as these are critical to the success of a student's educational process (Arranz, Ubierna, Arroyabe, Perez and de Arroyabe 2017:314). Entrepreneur modules can be viewed as a learning tool that enhances all academic programmes regardless of the discipline. These modules are intended to develop a graduate's ability to gain wealth through problem-solving and exploring new business opportunities (Edokpolor and Somorin 2017:144-145). According to Rasiah, Somasundram and Tee (2019:99) the number of new graduates exiting higher educational institutions outweighs the number of jobs available. Therefore, it is vital to embed modules that will assist the graduate

in becoming self-reliant and exploring the concept of start-up ventures, hence contributing to a country's economic development.

j) Organisational awareness

It has become increasingly important for companies to build flexibility into their product innovation processes as globalisation, accelerated technological advances, and the constant shift in customer expectations influence product development. In an era of increasing product innovation and highly volatile markets, evolutionary models have stressed the importance of using inter-firm networks to access new knowledge to enhance an organisation's existing knowledge (Liao and Marsillac 2015:5438). Therefore, Al-Shawabkeh and Hijjawi (2018:145) indicated that today's turbulent workplace and rapidly changing needs could impact organisational effectiveness as it heavily depends on an individual's skills, capabilities, and knowledge. However, achieving and maintaining high performance is major challenge organisations are encountering in the modern era (*ibid*).

Many organisations have introduced the concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL), which is viewed as a philosophy based on the premise that employees can make a valuable contribution while maintaining accountability to maximise an organisation's success. This is achieved by identifying areas that management must improve to enhance QWL, which include work-life balance, leadership, quality assurance, employees' involvement in management, managing stress, ensuring the working environment enforces fair and just practices, and open communication is encouraged (Al-Shawabkeh and Hijjawi 2018:149). Creating an organisational culture through introducing (QWL) will motivate senior members to be more susceptible to welcoming and educating graduates. It is believed that professionalism and ethical behaviours cannot be formally taught to graduates but instead passively infused through their interaction with senior employees of an organisation (Govender and Adegbite 2021:106). For organisations to stay competitive, the quality of work life (QWL) must be integrated and implemented as it influences all facets of the employee experience, such as productivity, motivation, satisfaction, and retention (Al-Shawabkeh and Hijjawi 2018:148). A student's self-efficiency levels are often improved by their involvement in learning and development training programmes. This gives graduates an increased level of self-confidence when dealing with complex interviews and demonstrating their abilities in the workplace. This may subsequently be achieved through developing their cultural and social capabilities which may be interlinked with their academic skills to elevate their individual capacity and desire for long-life learning (Ibrahim and Jaaffar 2017:14-15). Mahajan, Aruldas, Sharma, Badyal and Singh (2016:157-

158) propose that graduates need formal training prior to their immersion into an organisational setting as these eases their assimilation into the corporate world. For graduates to be taught essential attributes, mannerisms and how to achieve their goals requires these components to be integrated and embedded into a structured and well-planned curriculum (*ibid*).

2.4 Work-integrated Learning (WIL) and tourism education

The concept of WIL dates back over a century. It is considered a key strategy in developing graduates' industry-specific knowledge and skills (Rowe and Zegwaard 2017:87). Incorporating a WIL component into the curriculum allows for a smooth transition between the student's theoretical understanding and the realities of the working environment. The balance between academic strategies and practical experience is intended to assist students in developing their employability capabilities to operate effectively (Jackson 2015:350; Rowe and Zegwaard 2017:87). Therefore, it is imperative to understand the development and progression that is associated with WIL programmes on a local and global perspective. Different approaches are implemented by educational institutions in Germany, Switzerland, the USA and Australia that will be highlighted in this section to conclude the implementation of WIL in South Africa. Numerous challenges can impede a student's success during WIL (Abeysekera 2006:14) and can impact their ability to grasp themes and concepts, which will be emphasised in this section.

2.4.1 The development of Work-integrated Learning (WIL)

More than 100 years have passed since internship programmes were embedded into educational systems. This concept was founded by an engineering professor, Herman Schneider, at the University of Cincinnati, USA, to bridge the gap between theory gained in the classroom and the practical knowledge required by industry (Taylor and Geldenhuys 2016:2; Seager 2018:9). Maseko (2018:1318) highlighted that educational institutions worldwide describe Work Integrated Learning (WIL) as practicum, professional practice, internship, workplace learning, industry-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative education, fieldwork education, service learning, real-world learning, university-engaged learning, placements, experiential learning, and professional placement. Hence, educational institutions utilise WIL to promote the practical application of knowledge and skills in a simulated work setting, allowing students to gain practical experience through realistic work situations in order to enhance student performance (Rambe 2018:2).

According to Maseko (2018:1318), one of the earliest educational theorists, Dewey, believed that people learn by being actively involved. The author further maintained that concrete

learning is reached through experiential engagement with practical tasks that link educational and vocational competencies. Winberg, Engel-Hills, Garraway and Jacobs (2011:4) describe "work-integrated learning as curricular, pedagogic, and assessment practices across a range of academic disciplines that integrate formal learning and workplace concerns". Winberg *et al.* (2011:16) further highlighted that the Council on Higher Education has indicated that there are four modes of approach to WIL: Work-directed theoretical learning (WDTL), Problem-based learning (PBL), Project-based learning (PJBL), and Workplace learning (WPL)

a) Work-directed theoretical learning (WDTL)

Work-directed theoretical learning (WDTL) refers to theoretical learning that equips students with valuable knowledge to perform effectively in the workplace. There must be an alignment between the theoretical modules and the practical aspect of the qualification. Thus, providing students with a holistic view of industry expectations. This can be achieved, through different teaching methods and learning activities, such as formal lectures, students participating in group activities, presentations, case studies and guest lecturers from the industry, addressing current issues with students before their experiential learning (Spowart 2011:169; Du Plessis 2015:52; Seager 2018:12).

b) Problem-based learning (PBL)

Problem-based learning (PBL) is an educational approach to facilitate students' learning by equipping them to solve complex and intricate problems. Problem-based learning can stimulate a student's educational experience when more than one module in the qualification consists of problem-solving activities. This learning method encourages students to apply their theoretical knowledge to a practical application and equips them to provide a service while simultaneously developing their content knowledge of the module. The benefit of PBL is preparing students with industry-relevant skills such as problem-solving, rationalising, and communication (Du Plessis 2015:53; Seager 2018:12-13).

c) Project-based learning (PJBL)

According to Seager (2018:13), Project-based learning (PJBL) enables students to learn through projects. These projects expose students to real-life situations within the workplace. Students are expected to apply what they have learned to the realities of the working environment, employing the fundamental skills and theory gained through the different modules in their qualification to complete the project. The PJBL allows the academic and workplace supervisors to oversee the development and completion of these projects, which aids

in bridging the gap. The difference between PJBL and PBL within WIL is that PJBL involves an actual project in a workplace setting. At the same time, PBL often encompasses imitation learning at the educational institution (*ibid*).

d) Workplace learning (WPL)

Workplace learning (WPL) requires placing students in tourism businesses for a specific time frame to obtain discipline-specific knowledge and skills. WPL focuses on students' participation in the execution of duties and tasks under the supervision of both the academic and workplace supervisor. This type of learning can be analysed as an element of a student's curriculum or a non-accredited module to help students gain work experience. The conceptualisation of WPL was to develop and prepare students with industry-relevant skills for careers after graduation. WPL has experienced moderate success in bridging the skills gap in tourism due to the rapidly evolving nature of tourism businesses, as high-level technical skills and knowledge students are sought after in the tourism industry (Ndlovu and Mofokeng 2018:3).

According to Engelbrecht (2017:24), many countries have integrated experiential learning into their curriculum to maximise students' educational experience and to prepare them with the relevant skills to make them employable after they have completed their qualifications. The United States of America (USA) developed a system called vocational education, and an act was passed called the (old) Deluder Satan Act in Massachusetts in 1647. With the passing of this law, it was mandatory for every town with 50 or more families to engage a teacher to educate all children in reading and writing, whilst towns that had a population of 100 or more families were required to establish a grammar school to equip students to attend Harvard College. In 1963 the Vocational Education Act established the American vocational education system, and as a result, many countries followed this system. The USA, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom are world leaders in vocational education. However, there is much concern in the USA that the system is failing to prepare its people to be effective and productive in the working environment. Hence, the education system is encouraged to formulate innovative alternative approaches to prepare youth and adults to operate in a global economy. Further developments are being implemented in the USA to integrate experiential learning programmes that will allow students to acquire knowledge and skills about the workplace while still in school (*ibid*).

In Switzerland, there are Vocational Education and Training programmes that cater to the diverse occupations within the Swiss labour market. Many qualifications in the Swiss educational system are acquired in upper-secondary education, while equivalent qualifications are acquired at tertiary level education in other countries. The dual-track VET programmes are an educational system that entails practical training (traineeship) for three to four days per week at a training establishment. The student still attends academic classes one to two days per week. Furthermore, VET students attend inter-company developmental courses that improve their practical skills. Students can choose to complete their vocational education and training (VET) on a full-time basis. Thus, providing students with both practical and academic training in their field of vocational specialisation. Switzerland is recognised as a country for VET, particularly its dual educational system; this system would be beneficial if implemented in the South African educational system.

In 1974, a state-run German polytechnic institution, the Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (DHBW), sought alternative methods of incorporating skills development into the traditional university system. The DHBW study model was established due to the scarcity of skilled workers in the state of Baden-Württemberg-Germany. The DHBW model was facilitated through the successful partnership between the government, three significant employers and the educational institution. The DHBW model can be viewed as a type of work-integrated learning, and under this model, students are provided with real-world training through on-the-job learning, which is infused with theoretical knowledge. This approach is often viewed as a mechanism that can be utilised to address the gaps relating to skill deficiency and techniques that can be implemented to develop and enhance economic activity within the country. The rapid growth within Germany's tourism industry and structural changes within its society have led to the continuous need to advance qualification requirements. In Germany, the objective of the dual system is to equip and train workers for immediate and permanent employment. Therefore, Germany has updated their training protocols for current professions, and new training professions are being formulated, resulting in targeted qualification assisted through the dual system. (Reinhard, Pogrzeba, Townsend and Pop 2016:252; Engelbrecht 2017:30). The German DHBW model has often been evaluated to analyse the extent to which the model may be adapted and implemented globally (Reinhard, 2006). A further evaluation was conducted in South Africa and Namibia to assess the compatibility of the DHBW within higher education institutions in Africa. Hence, this results in a greater understanding of which elements of the DHBW model may be implemented within the continent (Reinhard *et al.* 2016:253).

In the late 1980s, Australia's national education system was divided into a three-tier system comprised of tertiary educational institutions established as universities, institutes of technology and a selection of Technical and Further Education institutions (TAFE). The Federal Minister of Education, John Dawkins, restructured this three-tier system into a two-tier one that allowed smaller tertiary institutions to form a merger and for institutes of technology to progress to university status. The two-tier tertiary education system proved successful during the early 1990s, and by the new millennium, TAFE colleges were approved to offer bachelor's degrees (Wikipedia). Within Australia, the advancement of technological systems and procedures has radically transformed the demand for specific professions and skills, highlighting the importance of incorporating work-integrated learning (WIL) in higher education (Reddan 2016:423). In 2008, the national consortium of Australian Universities was the leader in expanding WIL programs which addressed the scarcity of skills and undergraduate employability. This led to the development of the national internship scheme, which focussed on addressing the gaps between industry expectations and graduate perception through real-world interaction (*ibid*). In March 2015, industry stakeholders and Australian higher education representatives launched the National Strategy on WIL in University Education. The goal of the National Strategy was to develop the productivity of Australia's workforce, improve graduate employability and reduce the scarcity of skills within the industry. Employers have identified WIL's benefits and reinforced their associations with universities through work placement programmes (Reinhard, Wynder and Kim 2020:179).

In South Africa, the cooperative education system has existed since 1979. The Technikons, recognised now as Universities of Technology, facilitated, and implemented the cooperative education system in the 1970s and 1980s, with six months of theoretical learning and six months of practical training. The South African cooperative education system was adopted from the universities of applied sciences in Germany (Reinhard *et al.* 2016:250). Over the years, the South African government instituted policies highlighting WIL's importance. The establishment of The New Growth Path, the National Development Plan, the National Skills Accord, the National Skills Development Strategy, and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training indicated the emergent importance of workplace learning as an essential element of vocational education and the impact education and training have on the economic progression and the creation of jobs in South Africa (Govender and Taylor 2015:44; Ndlovu and Mofokeng 2018:2).

The National Department of Labour (DOL), in partnership with organised labour and the private sector in the mid-1990s, launched a National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) in 1997, which intended to develop and implement an innovative approach to enhance human resource skills in South Africa. The Skills Development Strategy aims to develop a workforce that is equipped with the relevant skills that will meet industry expectations, and assist disadvantaged groups through cost-effective and productive training, thus contributing to the development and evolution of the South African economy (Kaplan 2004:222). One vital purpose for developing and implementing the NSDS was the radical transformation of the education and training system within South Africa. The focus of the NSDS was directed towards training unskilled graduates who were entering the South African workforce upon completion of their qualification to bridge the gap between the inadequate skill levels and poor work readiness displayed by graduates exiting tertiary institutions. The NSDS policy is seen as a mechanism that allows the collaboration between industry, students, and educational institutions to be integrated under a governmental structure (Mabeba 2019:26).

The NSDS frameworks identified five objectives for skills development, which are life-long learning, encouraging the development of skills to boost the South African economy through productivity and sustainable employment, ensuring SMMEs are equipped with the relevant skills to drive their businesses forward, social development initiatives, and supporting new applicants into employment (Kaplan 2004:223). For the effective implementation of the above strategy, there needs to be a comprehensive understanding among academics and industry stakeholders on how to successfully integrate workplace and classroom learning. Continuous collaboration between different stakeholders should be maintained to ensure curriculum success (Jackson 2017:351). According to Mabeba (2019:26), a well-structured WIL program can equip students with the transferable skills and training required to impact the South African economy positively.

2.4.2 The importance of Work-integrated Learning (WIL) within tourism education

The tourism industry is an extraordinarily competitive and service-focused sector that places substantial emphasis on employing highly trained and experienced individuals who can uphold the company's business ethics and policies and provide quality services. In terms of employability, graduates exiting universities are at a disadvantage because they lack the necessary skills required to enter the tourism industry (Taylor and Geldenhuys 2016:1; Yusuf *et al.* 2018:65). Work-integrated Learning (WIL) can be viewed as a mechanism that promotes mutual benefits to all stakeholders. WIL supports economic growth by creating partnerships

between educational institutions, governmental agencies, and industry (Govender and Wait 2017:49-51). The inclusion of WIL in a student's academic curriculum is vital, as it links students who are potential employees and organisations who are the employers of the tourism industry (Freudenberg, Brimble and Cameron 2011:8; Atkinson, Misko and Stanwick 2015:14; Tomlinson 2017:341).

The WIL component at the tertiary level offers students an in-depth view of the role and responsibilities required for entry into their preferred career. Performing career-specific tasks in the workplace assists students in developing their workplace skills and accountability (Jackson 2015:353). WIL programmes are designed to target the development of skills crucial for preparing graduates for the workforce since many employers require students to have some practical experience. WIL participation is essential as it reduces the risk of students being disadvantaged in the labour market when they graduate due to a lack of experience (Nomnga 2021:1024). There is a growing demand for university students to engage in work-integrated learning, as many graduates excel theoretically but may lack the fundamental skills required in the world of business (Matsoso and Benedict 2020:95). Hence, Jackson (2017:153) emphasised that WIL facilitates a student's transition from the academic domain into the realities of the working environment. WIL provides students with an opportunity to engage in an authentic work experience and allows them to explore their future career prospects (*ibid*). WIL programmes are one of the strategic approaches educational institutions use to produce employment opportunities and develop employability skills for students, and this is evident by the increased number of educational institutions offering experiential learning (Rowe and Zegwaard 2017:89). Keating (2012:90) argues that WIL can prepare tourism students with industry-specific skills by proposing a valuable, dynamic, and well-structured framework of the learning experience. Therefore, education institutions view WIL as an ideal vehicle to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Taylor and Geldenhuys 2016:1; Wang, Gill and Lee 2022:2). However, Fidgeon (2010:720) stated that there remains a deficiency in the transfer of industry-specific skills to tourism graduates by educational institutions.

Wattanacharoensil (2014:13) concurs with Fidgeon, stating that the tourism curriculum lacks sufficient depth in skills development and that essential components must be addressed, something that can only be accomplished through the engagement of tourism industry stakeholders. When education institutions incorporate concepts, such as managing time effectively, working under pressure, and understanding the importance of being a productive

team player into the student learning process, those skills can positively impact the student's performance (Ojo 2019:10). The curriculum should not consist merely of content academics include and the industry must actively provide practical/applied content that will warrant curricular advancement (Jackson 2017:351). Ojo (2019:9) further suggested that practical learning is a philosophical term in which educationalists engage with students in shaping their knowledge through workplace practice to prepare them to adapt to the challenges of real-world experiences. Jackson (2015:352) highlighted that the key to achieving integration is effectively preparing students before practice-based activities, providing student support during placement, and providing time for reflection to link the two post-activity experiences. Therefore, an effective pre-WIL programme incorporated into the student's curricula would be crucial in developing a student's knowledge and training (Keating 2012:90). According to Azar, Albattat and Kamaruddin (2020:297), experiential learning is a process which involves the student's ability to reflect on tasks and training that was experienced during their assimilation into the working environment. Radović, Hummel and Vermeulen (2021:551-552) further suggested that the graduate's initial experience with workplace training plays a pivotal role in the construction of contextualised knowledge and reflection is required as an essential component in linking theoretical knowledge and practical experience. In the above model (Figure 2), experiential learning is a series of stages in which prior planning and reflection occur before entering the learning phase. As a result of learning, one develops a certain degree of intent, which might or might not be expressed and may influence how students handle a given situation (Olson, Kedrowski and Singh 2021:276).

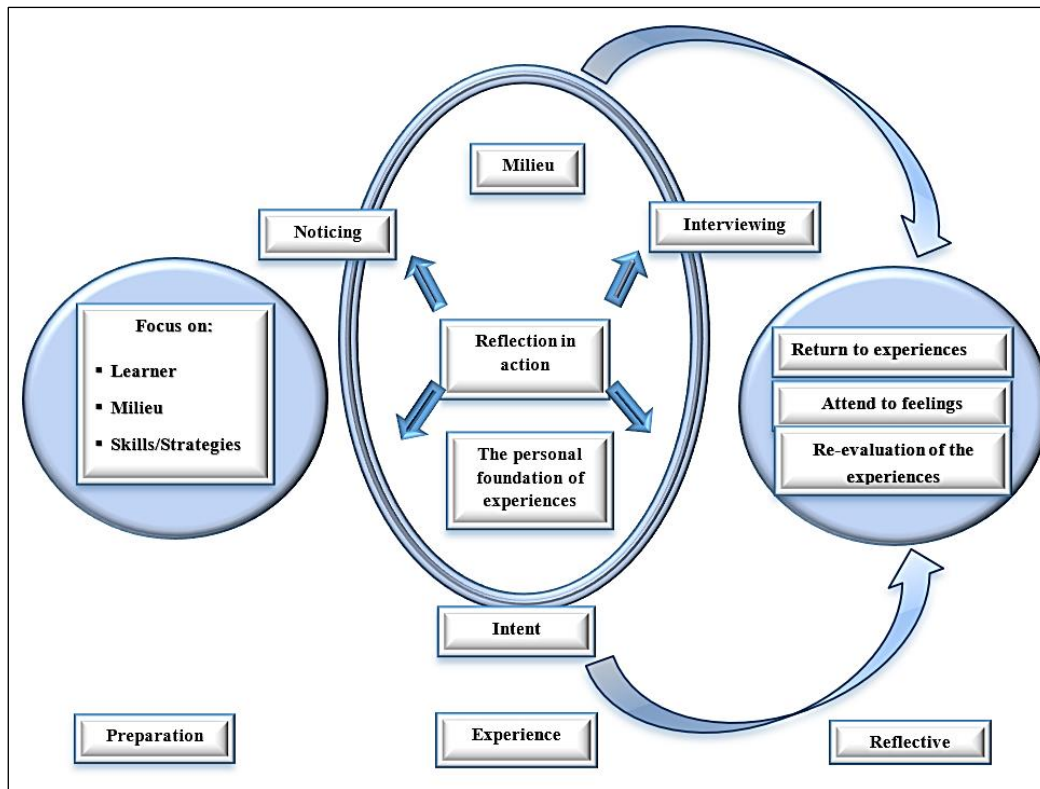


Figure 2.2: A model for tourism education
Source: Boud and Walker (1993:77)

Mavundla (2021:23) proposes that students who engage in WIL learn through observation, participation and reflection and are believed to enhance their industry-specific skills through active participation in the industry. Although, Radović *et al.* (2021:546) emphasised that if learners are not provided with a well-structured work-integrated learning framework, then the growth of experiential learning will be impeded. For WIL to generate the desired effect, new strategies must be formulated and integrated into the curriculum throughout their academic phase to maximise the learning outputs (Rowe and Zegwaard 2017:89). Ngwane (2017:4325) stated that higher educational institutions have come under scrutiny because they do not adequately prepare graduates with the relevant soft skills, which include problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, managerial and leadership skills that are required by industry. However, Ibrahim (2017:16) asserts that the tourism industry readily accepts students who possess critical thinking skills, can eagerly engage in developing their knowledge and are self-determined learners. Critical thinking has become an essential element of education and should be acknowledged by higher educational institutions as an essential learning outcome. Critical thinking skills can be viewed as twofold: Conceptualize (identify and evaluate complex situations in great detail) and Evaluation (identify, assess and keep in mind critical facts in different situations) (*ibid*). WIL can positively influence a student's educational journey and

afford them valuable opportunities such as networking with industry stakeholders and developing skills for future employment, resulting in permanent employment (Mabeba 2019:26). Therefore, students must adhere to work placement requirements and complete any projects assigned to them throughout the WIL programme. Also, it is during this time that student's generic and transferable skills are enhanced, personal characteristics are acquired, and they are given career opportunities and advancement prospects (Mavundla 2021:23). However, Fullagar and Wilson (2012:3) affirm that a problem persists among the different higher education institutions relating to the importance of educating students to think critically. Hence, by facilitating a structured developmental programme, WIL can meet and exceed stakeholders' expectations (Jackson 2015:351). Implementing a curriculum that underpins the integration of employability capabilities through WIL is still a challenge that traditional universities still need to overcome. Once WIL is integrated appropriately into the curricula, this will assist in cultivating personal qualities that will produce resourceful and flexible students who are confident in their abilities to thrive in their educational journey to success (Rowe and Zegwaard 2017:91-92).

2.4.3 The impacts of Work-integrated Learning (WIL) on workplace preparedness

The concept of WIL is primarily a student-centric programme, therefore, students would be the best participants to accurately assess its effectiveness and value to the tourism industry. As WIL is becoming an increasingly integral part of educational preparation, students are best qualified to judge whether the structures and processes of the WIL programme are effective. It is a relatively rare phenomenon that students who have completed their WIL placements were granted the opportunity to reflect on their experiences within the tourism sector by their WIL coordinators and program administrators at their educational institutions (Taylor and Geldenhuys 2016:2). It is improbable that the effectiveness of WIL could ever be fully quantified if its sole purpose is merely to provide work experience for students. Hence, it is imperative to evaluate and analyse the results of WIL post-placement to amend and develop current practices since students are the only participants directly involved with the teaching and learning process (Ramukumba 2021:391). Graduate work readiness has been an area of concern at educational institutions for several years. However, through the effective use of structured WIL programmes, students are allowed to develop their cognitive, affective and social capabilities to operate successfully in the workplace (Aprile and Knight 2020:871).

The goal of WIL is to promote student's learning, develop their employability skills and prepare them for the world of work (Rayner and Papakonstantinou 2015:14). WIL can prepare students to understand the daily operations of their host organisation, act as valuable contributors to their team, can adapt to different work settings, and develop a clearer vision of their career goals (Rayner and Papakonstantinou 2015:13; Jackson 2018:24). Hence, WIL prepares students to be immersed in the daily practices of the workplace. WIL encourages students through social interaction with seasoned employees to think critically, self-reflect and evaluate work practices as part of the process of work-readiness (Aprile and Knight 2020:871; Fleming and Pretti 2019:2).

According to Clements and Cord (2013:115) generic and transferable skills must be integrated into all curriculum levels rather than entrenched in one subject component. Jackson (2015:351) indicated that there should be a mixed model approach, where skills needed in the workplace can be integrated within a classroom setting, thus allowing students to experience real-world situations. Structuring specific learning outcomes and assessment content throughout the student's curriculum will help cultivate their knowledge and skills (Clements and Cord 2013:115). Jackson (2015:351) concurs with Clements and Cord, equipping learners to think critically, evaluate theories, and practice different workplace exercises will assist the learner in reflecting and creating a mental picture of workplace situations. There has been various research into the impacts of WIL and how structured are the WIL programmes in assisting students in developing industry-specific skills through their interaction with real-life situations (Rayner and Papakonstantinou 2015:13; Smith, Ferns and Russell 2014:19; Aprile and knight 2020:871). These skills include leadership, entrepreneurial skills, self-confidence, critical thinking, problem-solving, and a professional networking (Jackson 2018:25). Khampirat, Pop and Bandaranaike (2019:129) concur with Jackson (2018:25) highlighted that communication, teamwork, professionalism, time management and computer skills are valuable employability skills that are further enhanced through their interaction with WIL. The tourism industry requires customer-oriented graduates with a fair understanding of computer skills and the ability to operate the GDS (Global Distribution System) and have insight into the different geographical areas. However, these programs are costly for educational institutions to implement, and the institution will require skilled and experienced lecturers to teach the programme to students (Engelbrecht 2017:61). It is therefore imperative that educational institutions and industry work together to create a well-balanced curriculum that develops the students learning experience (Khampirat *et al.* 2019:129).

Students who have completed their WIL experience expressed their value of professional networking, having a clearer perspective of their career goals, improved self-confidence, enhanced communication skills and leadership capabilities, and interacting with experienced employees who have developed their creativity and critical thinking. These employability skills that graduates attained through WIL made them stand out in the tourism industry (Ramukumba 2021:395). Graduates who worked in a positive WIL environment where management displayed an interest in their students' performance will have a greater chance of receiving adequate technical training, as supervisors will be concerned about the training programme's success. This indicates that students who received adequate training in their jobs usually had supervisors who took the time to effectively train them to be prepared for the realities of the working environment (Taylor and Geldenhuys 2016:6). The industry must be committed to affording students the opportunities to apply their practical knowledge to authentic real-life situations with the appropriate mentoring and supervision. The student will develop work ethics and adopt the fundamental principles of workplace culture. Hence, it results in a quality and meaningful work experience that will benefit the student, industry, and economy (Samadi 2013:38). Therefore, obtaining valuable information about student experiences will assist and benefit the multiple stakeholders who are involved in WIL (Taylor and Geldenhuys 2016:3).

The concept of WIL has been implemented at Universities of Technology (UoTs) for many years but has exhibited deficiencies relating to the practical learning component. Educational institutions were focused mainly on executing the theoretical element of the curriculum and relied on their industrial partners/employers to shape the practical training aspects of the student's WIL experience (Nduna 2012:232). However, over the years, universities have evolved and played an active role in preparing their students for the realities and complexities of WIL. A study conducted at the Walter Sisulu University (WSU) in South Africa evaluated the work-preparedness programme (WPP) effectiveness in higher educational institutions. Before students embarked on the WIL programme, they had to attend the WPP as part of the institution's academic curriculum, also known as the "orientation programme". The core reason for the WPP was to inform students about what the industry expects from them and what they could expect from the industry, and this was done to get their student's frame of mind ready for WIL. Most of the students acknowledged that there was a relatively high degree of eagerness which contributed to the attendance of the WPP, and this resulted in students having a positive approach towards the commencement of their WIL (Dwesini 2015:2). Stansbie *et al.* (2016:19) indicated, that the assimilation of a student's theoretical knowledge and practical experience

can prove to be beneficial as this will allow students to be more productive and confident for the realities of their experiential training.

The preparation process can only be achieved if education institutions play a more proactive role in providing learners with an up-to-date, industry-relevant curriculum (Bello *et al.* 2019:5). It is therefore vital to develop an extensive and structured assessment of the tourism curriculum, enabling academics to address the gaps, facilitate new theories and practices to produce a well-rounded and educated workforce. This workforce must be equipped to meet and exceed international standards, benefit the employer, and give them a competitive edge against rival companies (Kusumawardhana 2019:2). The purpose of implementing structured assessments and training through their academic learning material can add value to their culture of learning by understanding industry-relevant concepts and theories, skills development, and increasing their self-confidence (Govender and Waits 2017:51-52).

Wingrove and Turner (2015:211) highlighted that educational institutions gain recognition by yielding competent work-ready students (Clements and Cord 2013:115; Aprile and Knight 2020:871). However, graduate employment opportunities are not secured merely by including WIL in students' studies. Furthermore, integrating a WIL element into the curricula does not guarantee that students will be prepared for the world of work. However, the process of accountability, continuous evaluation, and the development of innovative WIL approaches may lead to students becoming valuable and sought-after candidates by industry (Smith *et al.* 2014:16). Students are generally "spoken about" rather than "spoken to" when it comes to work-integrated learning as if they were mere objects of discussion rather than active participants in the process. It is paramount that educational institutions and tourism employers listen to and learn from students directly to improve tourism placements' quality (Taylor and Geldenhuys 2016:3). Figure 3 highlights a typical University's WIL framework.

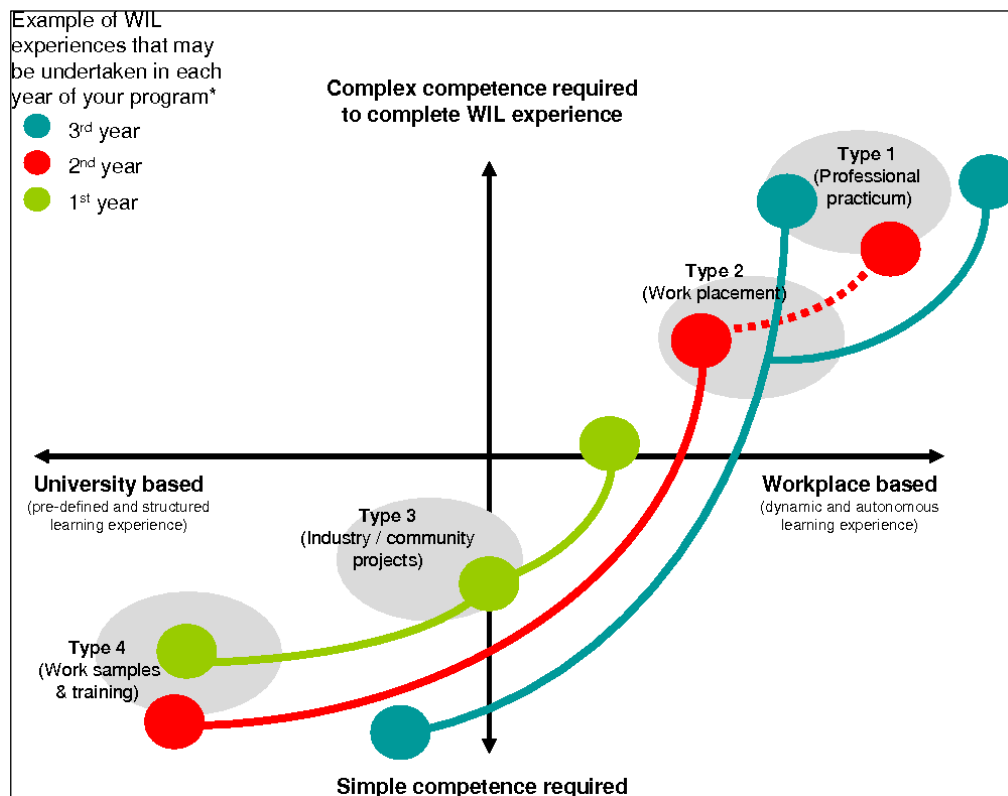


Figure 2.3: The University's WIL Framework

Source: Leong and Kavanagh (2013:6-7)

According to the WIL framework, Type 1 depicts a professional practicum which is monitored, and learners can participate in this experiential learning voluntarily (unpaid). Students will gain invaluable experience in their chosen discipline. Hence, they will be equipped with industry-relevant skills coupled with a set of industry-related principles and simultaneously completing their qualification. Type 2 focuses on work placement and provides students with an opportunity to participate in this experiential learning on a voluntarily (unpaid) basis. Students are monitored, supported, and evaluated professionally by their industry mentor relating to student discipline. Type 3 is based on industry and community projects where students either participate in experiential learning voluntarily (unpaid) or in projects concentrating on the community. This allows students to transfer the knowledge and competencies they have attained into the realities of the working environment. Type 4 focuses on work samples and training and comprises of assignments or students participating in industry events. These are planned, facilitated, monitored, and evaluated by the educational institution as a developmental course. This may include industry visitation and field expeditions, allowing the student to

experience industry-related activities and engage in community projects underpinned by the university, as illustrated in Figure 3.

2.4.4 Challenges of the Work-integrated Learning (WIL) Programme

WIL allows students to hone and develop their disciplinary skills, knowledge, and abilities. However, transitioning from higher education institutions to the workforce can be a challenging experience for some students (Dwesini 2017:1). In recent years, the WIL programme has become an essential tool for facilitating the development of qualified and experienced graduates who can operate successfully in the workplace (Jackson, Rowbottom, Ferns and McLaren 2017:3). The WIL programme is designed to improve students learning by integrating theory and practice. This creates a balanced approach to learning that will enhance the student's educational and professional readiness for success in the rapidly changing world of global business (Stanley and Xu 2019:4). Globally, the concept and value of WIL have been extensively acknowledged within the higher education sector. There are numerous techniques for including WIL in the student's curriculum. Although, there remain significant challenges that may hinder a student's ability to participate fully and reap the benefits of the WIL programme (Dyson and Briant 2018:35). Therefore, it is highly critical that these challenges are identified and evaluated. Suitable methods sought to address these issues (Dwesini 2017:1).

a) No orientation of the Work-integrated Learning (WIL) program

The use of student orientation is one of the most widely used methods of introducing students to the workplace. In the orientation, students are informed about the company's history and operations, job descriptions, and employment conditions (Self, Adler, and Sydnor 2016:486). Learners are expected to undergo induction/orientation on the first day of the WIL programme by their host company. This process is conducted to acquaint the learner with the workplace setting. Orientation assists learners in identifying what is required of them during their WIL experience (Dwesini 2017:6). There are two approaches in which students are inducted during the orientation process, which are formal and informal. The formal orientation is conducted in a classroom facilitated by the human resource department. In contrast, the informal orientation may be experienced in a casual setting where the student will engage with a workplace supervisor during on-the-job training. Both informal and formal orientation sessions are crucial to ensuring that students feel a sense of belonging and feel that they are making a valuable contribution to the organisation (Self *et al.* 2016:486).

According to Smith (2012:252-253), the educational institution plays an essential role in facilitating and implementing educational guidelines before a student goes through the induction and orientation process with their host company. Academics should give administrative tasks attention in developing learners in both theorecum and practicum, although this perhaps is viewed by WIL supervisors as additional work to their already busy schedule. These will entail creating, supporting, retaining and amending relations with industry stakeholders. Establishing an account of records, ensuring open communication with the learner and workplace supervisors, ensuring the learner is safe from hazards and threats, and their health and safety are not jeopardised.

Below par curricula will have the following concerns:

- Practical training is not integrated into the curricula
- Unbeneficial experiential learning for students
- Ill-equipped and discouraged learners
- Ill-equipped academic and host company managers
- Unprofessional work establishments lead to students being demotivated and rejected
- Unaccommodating, ineffective service industry

It is important to note that for a student to have fulfilling and rewarding experiential learning, it is evident that educational institutions should conduct a background check of the host company before the induction process can commence (*ibid*). Students need to be given a workplace manager/supervisor who will be able to guide the student through their WIL experience. The development and induction of students before they start with WIL are critical in providing them with clear guidelines of what is expected of them during WIL (Jackson 2015:352).

b) Inadequate support from the educational institution

Smith (2012:252) highlights that while students need to gain skills and knowledge during WIL, they must maintain contact with their academic supervisors and industry mentors throughout their training. Dwesini (2017:6) suggests that students require support from their educational institutions during the first few weeks of WIL, as they are still settling into the host company. Smith (2012:252) further asserts that it is vital for students to have clear and direct access to their academic mentor as a mechanism for feedback, support, and learning supervision. Dwesini (2017:6) highlighted that it was challenging for students who were placed far away from home to communicate this issue easily with their educational institution. Farmaki

(2018:51) further highlighted that administration concerns have been identified in impeding and limiting WIL's progression, including inadequate funding for academic supervisors to conduct on-site visitation. Jackson *et al.* (2017:39) assert that students must be able to communicate about the lack of organisational structure and resources within their host company to reap the full benefit of WIL, specifically regarding oversight and guidance. Smith (2012:252) believes that adequate support structures during work placement will ensure that students are afforded ample opportunities to learn, grow, and gain vital competencies required for lifelong learning. These structures also protect students from mismanagement by their host company and enhance their ability to acquire valuable experience during WIL (*ibid*).

c) No compensation during Work-integrated Learning (WIL)

Farmaki (2018:51) highlighted administration concerns, including insufficient compensation from host companies and a lack of incentive benefit schemes for students, which may impede a student's progression. Dwesini (2017:6) indicated that host companies do not compensate students during their WIL training, which will adversely impact the student's experiential learning, especially if they are working away from home. Swan and Smith (2018:134) suggested that educational institutions can provide financial support to students participating in WIL, including scholarships and a monthly stipend for students who do not receive any income from their host company. Dwesini (2017:6) further highlighted that students complained they did not have adequate finances for the following necessities to complete their experiential training:

- Lack of funds for transportation to and from their place of work
- Insufficient funds to acquire basic accommodation
- Inadequate finances to purchase meals

However, Jackson *et al.* (2017:39) highlight that issues dealing with students' compensation during their experiential training must be addressed by their academic supervisor before participating in WIL, and this must be an official element in the student's curriculum. Students must be aware that not every hosting company provides a monthly stipend, which should form part of and be integrated into the student's learning outcome (*ibid*). Chen and Shen (2012:30) assert that if there is a lack of planning and designing of the WIL program, unfair discrimination by host companies and disagreements with student's monthly stipend, this may negatively impact a student's experience and perhaps demotivate them to leave the industry after completing the WIL program. Students should view WIL as an opportunity to gain valuable work experience, not what they can gain financially. Therefore, this element must be

incorporated into the student's curriculum and discussed during classroom sessions to cognitively prepare them before placement (Jackson *et al.* 2017:39).

d) The impacts of visitation from academic/WIL supervisor

According to Smith (2012:252), students must have access to and retain interaction with their academic supervisors while participating in WIL. Wilson and Pretorius (2017:254) construe that supervisors' access relates to communication between the academic supervisor and the learner during WIL. The aim is to respond or offer feedback to students during their learning and encourage them while participating in their WIL experience (*ibid*). Smith (2012:252) further highlighted that the main objective of maintaining contact with academic supervisors is that students can gauge how they are performing during WIL and reflect on their experiences. There is an open communication channel for student support and academic supervision.

Swan *et al.* (2018:134) further affirmed that academic supervisors could assist in the following ways:

- It is gaining pertinent theoretical information/advice that can benefit students during WIL.
- Students will have access to additional resources that will support them during WIL.
- Students will have clear guidelines on how to complete academic assessments.
- Open and active communication with academic supervisors is vital for students' progress during WIL (*ibid*).

Jackson *et al.* (2017:38) assert that monitoring and evaluating students during WIL are imperative to the quality of work they yield. Visitation from academic supervisors will simultaneously allow the student to produce work of high standards and indicate to the student that the institution will support and motivate them to do the best they can and attain the experience they need to equip them with the relevant skills for future employment (*ibid*). Dwesini (2017:6) concurs with Jackson that visits from academic supervisors serve as a mechanism to assess the WIL program. During these visits, academic supervisors will privately talk with workplace mentors to evaluate the learner's performance. The learner will also converse with his academic supervisor, detailing their apprehensions. These visitations will create a stronger relationship between industry stakeholders and educational institutions. Therefore, the student will feel motivated and encouraged to perform at their peak (*ibid*).

For a WIL programme to be effective, it must comprise a three-way affiliation between the learner, the host company, and the academic institution. The enthusiasm, encouragement, and capability to be flexible offered by this three-way affiliation can, directly and indirectly,

influence a student's learning experience. This can either positively impact a student's learning experience or hinder their progression and ultimately cause them to leave the industry. Therefore, proper structures should be administered, ensuring the student can converse with their academic supervisor about any concerns they may have with their host company (Swan *et al.* 2018:134).

e) Alignment of assessment with integrative learning objectives

Wilson and Pretorius (2017:253-254) assert that for integrative learning to be successful, it must be embedded in the structure of the student's assessment. Time should be allocated to students after participating in stimulating classroom activities, where they can reflect on the role they played. Thus, allowing students to evaluate their performance with the guidance of their academic supervisor (*ibid*). Smith (2012:250-251) highlights that the goal of integrating WIL into the student's curricula is to give them opportunities to experience real-work settings. Hence ensuring students are confident and motivated to experience or engage in assessments/activities that will prepare them mentally and emotionally in their specific discipline. The following elements are crucial and should be included in the curricula:

- Activities and assessments should be planned and designed to allow students to experience an actual situation in a real-work setting. This will cognitively prepare the student to analyse, cooperate, and react to that situation.
- Even if the student approaches a specific situation relating to the activity they role-played in class, they will be confident in counteracting and neutralising the situation (*ibid*).

Aprile and Knight (2020:826-827) concur that realistic engagements within any given industry should assist students with the ability to self-reflect and critically analyse their performance and how their actions influence others. Students need to understand that WIL is not only about gaining skills and performing tasks but rather the flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing working environment. Smith (2012:250-251) argues that it is essential that educational institutions can communicate with key industry stakeholders requesting pertinent information about what are the core components that need to be integrated into the curricula to provide students with assessments and activities that will give them a sense of being a part of the industry and experiencing a real-work scenario (*ibid*).

The need for students to reflect before and after practical assessments. Jackson suggested that reflection tools, e.g., student journals, should be utilised to track their performance and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses associated with their assessments. A set of well-defined

guidelines for assessments and activities will ensure that the transfer of skills is adequately completed during WIL (Jackson 2015:352). Smith (2012:250-251) acknowledges that these assessments should provide students with an interactive and meaningful experience so that learners are encouraged to do their level best in achieving excellence in these activities, resulting in students attaining favourable outcomes. The purpose of these activities is to allow students to make mistakes but, at the same time, learn from those mistakes. This process will prepare the learner to achieve a positive ending if confronted with such a situation in the real-world (*ibid*).

2.5 Tourism education and Work-integrated Learning (WIL) in South Africa

The evolution of tourism education in South Africa was brought about by the influx of tourists frequenting the country. This has led the South African government to focus on tourism as a mechanism to boost economic activity and increase employment opportunities within its borders (Govender and Wait 2017:49). Government's interest in tourism activities has enabled tourism education to evolve from secondary to tertiary level (Engelbrecht, Spencer and Van Der Bijl 2018:229). It is, therefore, of great concern that education institutions develop and maintain relevant content, create innovative methods of delivering theory to their students and establishing a structured framework to facilitate skills development (Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2018:2; Engelbrecht *et al.* 2018:229). Hence, the importance of the South African statutory bodies and their role in preparing students for career opportunities in the tourism industry is pivotal for the sustainability and growth of the tourism industry (Razack 2017:35).

2.5.1 The history and growth of tourism education and training in South Africa

The development of the tourism industry in South Africa brought about the introduction of travel training programmes in the 1980s. In the 1990s, tourism management programmes were implemented in South Africa (Razack 2017:34). Tourism was introduced as a high-school subject throughout South Africa in the mid-2000s, highlighting the importance of tourism and its impact on the local economy. The South African government formulated this strategy to inform students about tourism and to generate interest in this academic discipline. The curriculum content was designed to equip students with the fundamental skills and training required to enter the tourism industry or further their education at a tertiary level (Van Niekerk and Saayman 2013:23). According to Engelbrecht *et al.* (2018:229) the South African educational system comprises of Basic Education, Higher Education and Technical Vocational Education and Training. These educational institutions have their qualifications registered and endorsed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Govender and Wait

(2017:49) maintain that the government has mandated South Africa's Higher Education institutions to ensure students are prepared with industry-relevant knowledge and are adequately equipped with specific competencies that are critical in supporting the continued growth of the economic sector. There is a demand for trained, qualified, and competent human capital that is required to reduce the ineffective service that is inhibiting the growth of the South African tourism industry. However, the tourism industry seeks to identify specific tourism qualifications that are required at different professional levels, but this proves challenging to locate (Makumbirofa and Saayman 2018:1).

Booyens (2020:1) highlighted that tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in South Africa. It has been validated by the gradual increase in tourist arrivals, spending patterns, and steady growth in employment since the post-apartheid era. South Africa is gaining momentum as a preferred tourist destination, and a steady demand for a well-educated and qualified workforce is required to drive the success of the tourism industry. There is a ripple effect when hiring an adequate workforce; firstly, they add value to the advancement of the organisation. Secondly, there is a positive impact on economic development (Makumbirofa and Saayman 2018:1). However, Booyens (2020:4) further highlighted that there had been a significant challenge that exists within the South African tourism education system. It is perceived that graduates encounter tremendous difficulty in entering the tourism workforce even with a tourism qualification. This is due to the poor collaboration between higher educational institutions and industry stakeholders (*ibid*).

According to Govender and Waits (2017:49-50), South Africa Higher Educational institutions have been challenged by tourism enterprises/industry to produce students of a high calibre regularly to maintain the economic sector's continual growth. Wang *et al.* (2010:8) state that education has evolved and steadily become crucial for the progression of human capital. According to Wakelin-Theron *et al.* (2018:2), the unemployment rate in South Africa is an enthralling concern, and the current relationship between higher educational institutions, the graduates they yield, and the tourism industry should be assessed. Over 11 million employment opportunities are required to reduce South Africa's unemployment rate from 27 per cent in 2011 to 6 per cent by 2030. Therefore, it is significant to determine the fundamental skills and knowledge that graduates should possess before entering the tourism industry (Govender and Waits 2017:50). Wakelin-Theron *et al.* (2018:2) highlighted that the majority of graduates who participated in WIL concluded that they lacked the relevant knowledge and skills that are deemed essential in securing employment in the tourism industry.

Therefore, the South African government has voiced their concern regarding the education students are currently being taught and how effectively the curriculum incorporates skills development and training (Engelbrecht *et al.* 2018:229). Zwane *et al.* (2014:1) infer that the Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport SETA (CATHSSETA) programme was strategically designed, facilitated, and implemented by the South African Government to develop and improve the level of skills for the people of South Africa. According to Tourism Trends and Policies (2018:33), for a country's tourism sector to thrive, there is a need for governmental agencies to support tourism education through funding, planning, and coordination. It has been highlighted by various authors that there appears to be a breakdown in constructive collaboration between higher educational institutions and the tourism industry stakeholders. Educational institutions are failing to produce graduates who ought to be well-equipped with the essential skills required to operate efficiently and confidently in the tourism industry (Zwane *et al.* 2014:8; Taylor and Geldenhuys 2016:3; Jackson *et al.* 2017:42).

Skills development is fundamental to the progression of the tourism industry. Graduates need to be effectively prepared with well-defined knowledge and equipped with a distinct set of skills that are required to operate with a level of success in the tourism industry (Felisitas *et al.* 2012:13; Booyens 2020:4). Engaging a competent workforce does not only have a decisive influence on the economic growth of South Africa but also assists in establishing the country within the global tourism market. For South Africa to compete globally, tourism businesses must hire a labour force knowledgeable about current tourism products and services and equip them with the necessary skills that are essential for the progression of the tourism industry (Makumbirofa and Saayman 2018:1).

2.5.2 Statutory bodies that govern tourism education in South Africa

According to the council of higher education (CHE, 2022) website, the following educational authorities play a pivotal role in South Africa with the following impacting tourism education and training:

- South African Qualification Authority Act, No. 58 of 1995
- Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997
- Skills Development Act, No. 94 of 1998
- National Qualification Framework Act, No. 67 of 2008
- The Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework

a) South African Qualification Authority Act, No. 58 of 1995

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is a statutory body formed to develop and implement the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The role of SAQA is to constitute policies and regulations and to ensure the objectives of the NQF are achieved (SAQA 2020).

b) Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997

According to the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (1997:2), the purpose of this Act is to encourage and support the transference of excellent education in the tertiary sector. This Act oversees higher education in South Africa and legislates policies regarding the facilitation and implementation of the council of higher education (CHE). Independent assessors who are specialists in higher education are appointed to inspect tertiary institutions and register private educational institutions.

c) Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998

This Act aims to improve the skills of the South African labour market and create a better quality of life for employees. The role of the skills development act (1998:8) includes the following:

- It supports the concept of being self-employed and motivates employees to be productive and efficient at work.
- This Act also encourages employers to use their organisation as a learning ground to bring about unique and innovative opportunities for employees and new entrants to apply their knowledge, gain work experience and attain new skills.
- To offer employment prospects to individuals who find it challenging to be employed.
- Ensure excellent learning standards are constantly maintained and encourage employees to engage in training programmes actively.
- Opportunities should be given to disadvantaged South African people through training and education.
- Individuals who have become unemployed through retrenchment should be given a break to re-enter the workforce.
- To facilitate and implement employment services, e.g., establishments to find competent and skilled employees.

d) National Qualification Framework Act, No. 67 of 2008

The Act requires the institutes responsible for executing the NQF to do so in a translucent and cohesive manner. To successfully achieve the objectives of the NQF, SAQA needs to oversee the operation of the NQF in alignment with a set of guidelines devised by SAQA after discussions with QCs (NQF Act 13(1) (e)). The Act strives to ensure that all education and training offered in South Africa is of exceptional standards. The NQF encourages student development and boosts the economic and social structures of the South African economy (SAQA 2020). The NQF is made-up of different level descriptors. Jugmohan (2009:13) asserts that level descriptors are different levels of knowledge and skills taught to learners for a specific NQF qualification.

e) The Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF)

According to the council of higher education (2013:11), the HEQSF promotes the integration of all higher education qualifications into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by ensuring that continual standards of quality are being adhered. It serves as an instrumental tool in cultivating the level of consistency and directs the articulation possibilities between qualifications. Hence, supporting learners to progress from one programme to another in pursuit of their academic/professional goals (CHE 2013:6). The HEQSF is designed to:

- Accommodate the different types of higher education institutions and allow them the liberty to develop their curriculum creatively.
- Promote the facilitation of education to the graduates of South Africa, who will, in turn, contribute socially, culturally, and economically to the country's growth.
- Promote the development of a progressive, high-calibre research system.
- Ensure that our qualifications meet international standards.
- Encourage the development of new qualifications.
- Be simple to use and easy to comprehend for the higher education system and its users.
- Support qualification articulation in the different educational programmes in higher education and recognise possible progression routes for learners (CHE 2013:12).

2.5.3 The role of UoTs in tourism education and training in SA

In South Africa, a plan to grow and develop the educational sector to meet global standards resulted in implementation of the National Plan Higher Education 2001. This plan was to convert Technikons into Universities of Technology (UOT) or merge Technikons into Universities to establish Comprehensive Universities. Traditional Universities defined the

educational institutions within South Africa. The process of restructuring Technikons to UOTs allowed for these institutions to offer degree programmes, opportunities for redesigning curricula, increased partnership with global businesses, and the reinforcing of theoretically applied knowledge and skills in higher education in South Africa (Perumal 2010:47). Traditional universities (TUs) and Universities of Technology (UoTs) demonstrate contrasting roles in the graduates they produce. The TUs emphasise an academic curriculum, while UoTs focus on a vocation-based curriculum. UoT prepares graduates with the relevant skills and knowledge that the industry requires to transition into the workplace. A unique feature is that UoT's curricula provide students with the addition of a mandatory work-integrated learning (WIL) element, enabling UOT graduates to transcend above other potential applicants (Jacobs and Dzansi 2015:102-103). Educational institutions that adopt student-centred structures will produce intrinsically motivated learners who will be self-driven to pursue, create new concepts and develop their knowledge. Learners will have the ability to gain and retain information when they are actively involved in the learning process and when they can apply what they have learned to a real-world situation. The different activities implemented in the classroom to achieve learning goals, assessments to measure students' ability, and the criteria used to weigh the learning process are critical in the development of students (Scholtz 2020:27).

Universities of Technology are well positioned to develop the skills and knowledge required to impact the South African economy's growth positively. Students trained in technological and human sciences are afforded more employment opportunities based on their technological abilities (Perumal 2010:51). Therefore, the revised national Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) urged academics from UoTs to reflect on WPBL amongst other practices and assess areas of development. Workplace-based learning (WPBL), work-integrated learning (WIL), cooperative education, experiential learning, and internships are distinctive aspects of diploma qualifications at UoTs in South Africa. Diploma qualifications are three-year accredited programmes, with WPBL/WIL as a module in the final year of study. UoT were encouraged to institute innovative approaches to enhance education and training for students in South Africa. The assessment tool utilised in evaluating WPBL/WIL is evidence of portfolios and performance appraisals to gauge if students are learning the proposed outcomes during their experiential training (Scholtz 2020:26-27).

According to Mabeba (2019:24), there are contrasting opinions about the association between the internship programme and skills development. However, many seek to attain a higher educational qualification as they view this as an instrumental tool in locating and securing

future employment opportunities. Gaining a university education is pursued by many as a means of getting ahead in a highly competitive labour-intensive market. Industry stakeholders, graduates, and Higher Education Institutions (HEI) recognise that work-based learning, placements, and internships programme is essential in encouraging graduates' employability capabilities (*ibid*). Therefore, Industries have frequently recognised universities of technology (UoTs) for their proactive, goal-oriented approach to cultivating and producing knowledgeable graduates who can adapt to the complexities of the workplace (Scholtz 2020:25)

South Africa's Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) strategy is to enable higher education institutions (HEIs) to continuously yield graduates who can exhibit the ability to adapt to an ever-changing work environment. This will ensure that students are eagerly engaged and accountable for their experiential learning (Jacobs and Dzansi 2015:102; Aprile and Knight 2020:871). UOTs play a critical role in ensuring students receive a productive WIL experience. They need to affirm that staff and workplace supervisors are competent and knowledgeable in their field of specialisation for a student to receive quality mentoring. There should be an open communication channel that allows students to meet with their academic supervisors, as they play a pivotal role in assisting and supporting students to communicate their views and critically evaluate experiences gained through WIL, resulting in a profitable WIL experience (Nduna 2012:234).

2.5.4 Tourism curriculum in South Africa

Tribe (2005:258) indicated that tourism in South Africa has rapidly grown, and a "mushroom effect" has occurred. However, the substantial growth of institutions providing tourism education does not necessarily equate to better training for those who pursue it. In 2006, tourism as a subject was introduced at the high school level in South Africa. By 2015 there were 2,901 schools offering tourism as a subject (Booyens 2020:9) which has progressed in South Africa, currently offering tourism as a higher education qualification at various accredited traditional universities, universities of technology, technical colleges and many private institutions (Engelbrecht *et al.* 2018:229). In South Africa, the qualifications that a graduate can obtain upon successful completion of the tourism programme range from a Higher Certificate to a Doctorate (Department of Labour 2008:57; Razack 2017:5). Jugmohan (2009:10) critiques that many education institutions offering tourism programmes are not accredited, and the curriculum is designed by recent graduates with little or no industry experience. However, according to Zwane *et al.* (2014:1), the South African government has primarily focused on

education and training to improve the tourism industry's labour market and provide opportunities to the future workforce.

Table 2.2: Comparison of selected WIL practices of South African educational institutions that offer tourism programs

University of Technology	Traditional University	Independent Institute of Education, Private college (IIE)	Technical Vocational Education and Training College (TVET)
Tourism Development	Communication	Travel and Tourism Practice	Tourism Communication N4, N5, N6
Tourism Management	Marketing	Tourism Development	Tourist Destinations N4, N5, N6
Travel and Tourism Practice	Tourism systems	Tourism Management	Travel Office Procedures N4, N5, N6
Marketing for Tourism	Impacts of tourism	Tourism Marketing	Travel Services N4, N5 N6
Communication	Travel and Tourism Management	Tourism Communicative Languages: IsiZulu / IsiXhosa	Hotel Reception
End-user computing (Computer background Theory)	Travel operations	Events Management	Computer Practice
End-User Computing (Practical)	Management and Human resources	Digital and Academic Literacies	In service training (18 months)
Events Management	Financial Management	Introduction to Quantitative Thinking and Techniques	
Foreign language (German)	Tourism planning	Introduction to Accounting and Finance	
Work-integrated learning (6 months)	Sustainable and responsible tourism	Tourism Legislation	
	Destination development	Niche Tourism	
	Research of tourism development	Work Integrated Learning 1 (Year 2)	
	Work-integrated learning (6 months)	Work Integrated Learning 2 (Year 3)	

Source: Durban University of Technology (2022); University of Johannesburg (2021:8); Northlink College (2022); IIE Rosebank College (2021)

Four educational institutions have been analysed and reviewed to gain a greater understanding of the tourism curriculum and WIL practices. An overview of the tourism curriculum and the WIL programmes from an accredited traditional university, a university of technology, a

technical college and a private institution is presented in Table 2.2. This will illustrate the similarities and differences. The education institutions outlined in Table 2.2 present tourism education programmes while incorporating work-integrated learning into their curricula. Inherently, the curriculum reflects the integration between tourism theory and practice and creates a coherent alignment between both.

Tourism development

Table 2.2 indicates specific subjects that are common throughout the different educational institutions. At the University of Technology, tourism development is offered as a subject, whereas at the Traditional University, it is offered as different subjects. This covers the impacts of tourism, tourism planning, sustainable and responsible tourism, and research in tourism development. In Private institutions, tourism development is offered as a subject, but tourism legislation is an added element, and at TVET College, this subject is not covered in the curriculum. There has been a global demand for the tourism sector to align with the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to contribute to Sustainable development. Universities have a pivotal role in developing industry leaders with "strong sustainability" mindsets, empowering them to significantly impact the tourism industry (Dube 2020:88-89). Tourism graduates display limited knowledge of sustainability, partly due to the structure of tourism courses based on weaker conceptions of sustainability and a lack of flexible, critical, and systemic thinking. The South African educational authority has mandated that tourism development be included as part of the tourism curricula to grow sustainability within the country (Siakwah, Musavengane and Leonard 2020:361).

Tourism management

The subject of tourism management is offered at the University of Technology, while at the Traditional University, it is also offered as a subject but encapsulates added elements such as tourism systems financial management, management, and human resources; in Private Institutions, tourism management is offered as a subject, but an introduction to accounting and finance and quantitative thinking and techniques is an added element. Whereas in TVET College, tourism management is not focussed on as a priority subject, there are elements within the subject of travel office procedures that have a content based on management. Although, the content is not comprehensive and very limited in nature. In South Africa, tourism is a vital contributor to the economy. With the rising number of international and domestic travellers, it becomes increasingly important to have qualified and skilled personnel to support this growth by offering short courses, certificate programmes, and degrees. Academic institutions play a

crucial role in shaping and delivering education and training (Thapa 2019:31). In a country with a high unemployment rate among youth, possessing the right managerial skills and training may provide graduates with financial independence. In addition to having an impact on a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), entrepreneurial and managerial skills also play a pivotal role in alleviating poverty by equipping them with the capabilities such as financial, human resource and entrepreneurial skills that promote self-awareness, innovation and a strong sense of self-confidence (Iwu, Opute, Nchu, Eresia-Eke, Tengeh, Jaiyeoba and Aliyu 2021:2).

Travel and tourism practice

The subject of travel and tourism practice is offered by the University of Technology and Private Institutions, whilst at the Traditional University, it is covered in the subject of travel operations. At TVET College, there are three subjects related to travel and tourism practice: travel services, tourist destinations and hotel reception. South Africa's tourism industry is projected to grow at a rate of 3.3% annually, reaching 1.8 billion tourist arrivals by 2030. This has exacerbated the competition among different tourist destinations around the world. Hence, a destination must retain its competitive advantage to maintain its position in the tourism sector. A destination's ability to compete with other destinations globally is key to its success and prosperity. Global competition can make outdated strategies ineffective for future success. The need to employ the right strategies to remain competitive in the global context is essential for any destination. Therefore, destinations must know how to remain distinguished in today's highly competitive environment (Cronje and du Plessis 2020:256). One of tourism's most rapidly growing sectors is nature-based or ecotourism. The ecotourism market is one of the fastest-growing segments of tourism on a global scale and is forecasted to increase by 25 to 30 percent annually.

Ecotourism and wildlife were identified as the most significant and fastest-emerging tourism sub-sector, representing 88% (13.4 million) of the total number of tourists visiting South Africa. On average, 50% of the 12.1 million holiday tourists will spend about R3486 daily experiencing wildlife on their trip. Engaging in the ecotourism sector could facilitate small tourism businesses, such as tour operators, guest houses, and restaurants, to diversify their business operations, increase their business growth and promote sustainability (Litheko 2021:257-259). In order to address tourism-related problems that result in positive and negative impacts, suitable qualification and training programmes must be directed at preparing tourism personnel to effectively pursue sustainable tourism strategies as the tourism industry continues to evolve (Jugmohan, Giampiccoli and Mtapuri 2022:126).

Tourism has undergone radical changes in the last few decades due to the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT). As the 1950s gave rise to in-house computers, global distribution systems emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, evolving into the Internet in the 1990s and until the present day (Adeola and Evans 2020:97-98). Technology is critical to the development and success of the tourism industry and has revolutionised how people communicate, and the way business is conducted globally. As a result, the tourism industry is constantly evolving due to advances in information technology. This is due to specialised software applications that are transforming the industry and influencing its sectors which include transport, attractions, travel intermediaries, and government relations. Within the tourism industry, all sectors use technology to their advantage since it provides efficient, relevant, and timely data that significantly affects the quality and consistency of services offered. The interdependence nature of the tourism industry and the effective networking of different sectors, make the application of information technology indispensable for growth (Sifolo and Henama 2013:1).

There are different systems utilized by tourism businesses, such as the Global Distribution System (GDS), which include Sabre (founded 1960), Amadeus (founded 1987), Galileo (founded 1988), Abacas (founded 1988) and Worldspan (founded 1993). The Global Distribution Systems play an increasingly essential role in the tourism industry as they bring together the buyers and suppliers of the sector. The use of this technological software (GDS systems) and the Internet underpins the development of international information networks that enables all major airlines, tour operators, travel agencies, and accommodation establishments to acquire and process data, reserve travel services, and market tourism products (Sifolo and Henama 2013:2; Jansen van Rensburg 2014:2). Many companies have adapted their processes to keep up with technological advancements and remain competitive in this technological age (Booyens and Rogerson 2016:521). Therefore, travel agents must possess the right skill-set to operate these systems in order to add value to the clients travel experience, provide a personalised service, negotiate fair prices, and gain access to exclusive offers and benefits. It is important that a travel agent is able to customise the travel experience to meet the specific request of each client, and proposing suggestions based on their expressed request. In addition, if they are to succeed in meeting the needs of specific target markets, it is vital that they adhere to marketing principles and apply differentiation in order to stand out from their competitors. During this period, hoteliers, airlines, and other hospitality providers became increasingly dependent on travel agents and often paid them a fee for each reservation they made. As part

of this arrangement, suppliers of travel products considered travel agencies as important associates and invested their resources in building long-term relationships with them (Jansen van Rensburg 2014:2-3).

South Africa's tourism industry is renowned locally, nationally and globally, making it one of the most prominent destinations on the African continent. The country ranked first (8.9 million) in international arrivals in 2015, accounting for 16.7% of the market. Also, it generated the highest international tourism receipts (8.23 billion US dollars), accounting for 24.9% of the total market share. The South African government's primacies is to promote domestic tourism and accelerate its growth by primarily focusing on products such as parks, wildlife, nature and culture. A strong human resource base is crucial to ensuring sustainability of the tourism industry in South Africa, given the influx of international and domestic tourist's arrivals. Additionally, the product mix has expanded to include growth sectors such as casino, aviation, meetings, conventions, and exhibitions, which has increased the demand for an updated curriculum and competent workforce. Therefore, educational institutions play a fundamental role in developing graduates with the relevant skills, and expertise to effectively cope and succeed with the pressures of the tourism industry (Thapa 2019:30).

Marketing for Tourism

Marketing for tourism is reflected throughout the different institutions, but niche tourism is an added element in the Private Institutions. Upon closer analysis, the TVET College also offers marketing, covered in travel office procedures. Tourism has emerged as one of the most rapidly growing markets in South Africa and around the world. Understanding this industry and how tourists are informed and guided about various tourism products is crucial. A marketer's role is not to find clever ways to sell what one makes but to create genuine customer value. To do this, they need to focus on quality, service, and value, so it can be argued that the ability to market a product is as important as the product itself. The effectiveness of marketing will be improved by using more effective marketing strategies, especially in small-medium businesses with limited resources (Thwala and Slabbert 2018:5). In this modern era where consumer behaviour leaning towards digital platforms to seek out information on tourism products, many tourism organisations have gravitated towards the use of online channels and electronic systems to meet the demands of the growing trend. This has given rise to the exponential increase in E-marketing strategies being employed and executed by tourism businesses within South Africa (Matikiti, Mpinganjira and Roberts-Lombard 2018:2-3). Social media marketing has revolutionised tourism activities by providing 24/7 service, reducing time restrictions, offering

affordable marketing opportunities, and is easily understood. E-marketing has been slowly replacing traditional marketing channels in recent years. One of the most utilised digital channels is social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Using viral messages on social media makes it especially suitable for the tourism business environment. Tourism marketers have taken full advantage of social media marketing and used E-marketing platforms to provide maximum brand exposure and increase customer participation (Matikiti *et al.* 2018:2-3). Tourism marketing integrates all the activities of the organisation, which are coordinated to satisfy the tourists. In addition, tourism marketing is a strategic management approach that evaluates market demand and chooses the market that aligns with the organisation's objectives, which will reap the most significant returns (Sadq, Othman and Khorsheed 2019:3).

In a highly competitive marketplace, marketing effectiveness relies strongly on the marketing mix. It influences other elements, including environmental scanning, consumer and organisational buying and behaviour, competition analysis and strategies, marketing information, strategic marketing and operational efficiency. Marketing is responsible for ensuring that the marketing mix for a new product aligns with customer needs and pursuing opportunities to leverage the organisation's strengths to promote additional travel products in emerging markets, which is a highly complex and creative process (Thwala and Slabbert 2018:5). It is therefore essential that tourism graduates possess the relevant knowledge and skills required to enter into the tourism labour market. South Africa is no exception, as governmental agencies have placed great importance on developing education and training within the country (Nkwanyane, Makgato and Ramaligela 2020:28).

Tourism businesses depend on the calibre of graduates that join the tourism industry as it directly impacts their organisation's competitiveness. Tourism marketers must remain relevant by creating brand loyalty between their establishments and consumers. Travel businesses that employ young, vibrant and skilled graduates can diversify their product offering through digital platforms, as the Y generation prefers using images, videos and social websites to gain insight into travel products (Chivandi, Samuel and Muchie 2020:952). In developed countries, tourism is not yet fully tapped as a viable economic development tool due to a lack of highly skilled human capital, which has impeded their progression due to inadequate education programs and curriculum planning in the hospitality and tourism industries at both secondary and higher educational levels (Velempini and Martin 2019:1). Therefore, tourism education should

encompass elements of electronic marketing in the modern-day curricula as an innovative approach to drive the tourism sector to a new level (Chivandi *et al.* 2020:952).

Tourism communication

Tourism communication is offered as a subject in the different institutions (Table 2.2), although private institutions do not include this subject in their curricula. Tourism is commonly viewed as a kind of "super industry" capable of radically transforming an entire country's economic standing and the quality of life of all its citizens in a short period (Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2018:3). The study of language and communication skills forms an essential part of the academic curriculum for students preparing for careers in the tourism industry since this is a global service industry. An essential condition for improving the South African tourism industry and the services delivered are strengthening communications skills in the current workforce. Globally, tourism accounts for 10% of employment. In South Africa, it represents 9.5% of employment. In addition, higher education institutions' tourism curricula must emphasise language and communication skills since tourism graduates are expected to demonstrate excellent communiqué skills (Rautenbach and Mann 2019:2).

It is crucial to employ capable personnel across all levels of the organisation to improve sustainability and ensure continued competitiveness. The right people with the correct skill set are fundamental to the industry's success. This personnel plays an integral role in the service delivery process. They are essential to meeting and exceeding customers' expectations, building loyalty, and generating positive word-of-mouth about the business. A proactive approach contributes significantly to customer satisfaction, excellent service, and improved organisational productivity and effectiveness (Wessels, du Plessis and Slabbert 2017:1-2). Therefore, in recent years, higher education institutions have been under increasing pressure to equip graduates with the necessary knowledge, skills, and training to become highly competitive and employable in the tourism sector. The tourism qualifications offered by HEIs should be aligned with the needs and expectations of the tourism industry (Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2018:1). Hence, it is critical to identify the kind of skill sets that tourism graduates should acquire to enable them to succeed in the corporate world (Rautenbach and Mann 2019:1). However, Wessels *et al.* (2017:1-2) indicated that inadequate training and education of personnel in the tourism industry has resulted in poor-quality experiences for tourists and has negatively impacted tourist's numbers.

The ability to communicate is vital, and several problems can result from a lack of communication skills. Personnel must be adept at communicating with internal employees and facilitating the external flow of communication between new and current clients. The South African tourism market is diverse in its product offering, and new employees must display the ability to adapt to different cultural settings, demonstrate excellent client relations skills and have a strong sense of communication etiquette while personalising tourism experiences which is key to the growth of any establishment (Wessels *et al.* 2017:1-3). In business, language and writing skills are critical to communicating effectively. For a business to function productively, one must possess the skill of communication, which is paramount to business success. The ability to communicate professionally in the workplace is imperative in the tourism industry, and graduates must be capable of interacting across diverse communication channels upon entering the profession (Rautenbach and Mann 2019:3).

End-user computing

The subject of end-user computing is offered at the University of Technology and in the Private institution under digital and academic literacies. At the same time, at TVET College, it is covered under the subject of computer practice. However, the traditional university does not include this subject in their curricula. The South African tourism industry is a critical economic driver with the potential for continuous development since it provides a multi-sectoral supply chain. Tourism is considered one of the country's primary job creators. In order for the tourism sector in South Africa to grow, a skilled and specialised labour force is required. It is, therefore, essential that the local workforce understands the nature and significance of tourism and should have the capabilities to critically analyse its potential (Van Niekerk and Saayman 2013:20). Furthermore, with the growth of the South African tourism industry, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has swiftly infiltrated the public sectors of the country (Adukaite, van Zyl and Cantoni 2016:54-55).

New technologies are used in varying degrees depending on the attitude and perception of the user towards the technology, their perceived ease of use, and the benefits gained from utilising it. Employees who have a positive attitude towards a specific technology are more likely to become knowledgeable and proficient in using it. If an employee believes that using a specific technology will enhance performance or support the company, that employee will be keen to implement it. When technology is perceived as having an easy implementation process, personnel are more likely to take advantage of it. In addition to providing the technical background for specific technologies, this can also identify the skills needed for these systems

to function. Therefore, due to technological advances and the emergence of new tourism software applications, it has become more important to educate and train staff to keep abreast with current trends and endure the competitive nature of the tourism market for business to succeed (Matikiti *et al.* 2018:3). Technological advancement has revolutionised how tourism businesses function and organise their daily operations. Today's tourism market is driven by modern technology and the tourists' need to experience "everything new". The pace of technological innovation, increasing more rapidly than ever, has resulted in the higher education system adopting an array of strategies to positively influence student's classroom learning (Wakelin-Theron, Ukpere and Spowart 2019:59). However, Johnstone (2021:68) argues that the tourism programmes offered within the South African education system are below par and are negatively perceived by the tourism industry due to the lack of students' technical skills. This, in turn, places tourism graduates at a disadvantage concerning employability.

This causes increasing pressure on the tourism industry to continue providing in-house training programs to adequately equip graduates with industry knowledge, relevant skills, and employability attributes that will empower them to operate efficiently and excel in a global environment where technology has evolved exponentially. For this reason, it is imperative to assess the current capabilities of tourism graduates since it is essential for future planning (Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2019:59). Therefore, DHET must make provision to seek out innovative approaches of incorporating reservation systems software and computer literacy training programmes into the current tourism curriculum, as it is required in the industry. Higher education institutions should be a prerequisite to ensure that graduates obtain these certificates for tourism software programmes prior to completing their qualifications, as this will enhance their academic achievements and employability (Johnstone 2021:68).

Event management

Universities of Technology and Private institution offer event management as a subject; conversely, the Traditional University and the TVET College does not include this subject in their curricula. In recent years, there has been a rapid growth in the popularity of events as attractions worldwide. Visitors have become increasingly common to attend events to experience the local cuisine and culture, attend sporting events, or merely be entertained. Additionally, local and regional events such as the Comrades Marathon, Durban July Horse Race, and the Cape Town International Jazz Festival have benefited the local economy and helped maintain the domestic tourism market. In many destinations, events have been

recognised as a strategy for attracting investment in tourism, particularly in developing economies like South Africa (Mxunyelwa 2017:1).

In South Africa, business tourism is flourishing. Tourism derived from Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) events is one of the primary sources of tourism, contributing 9.5% to the country's gross domestic product (Venske 2019:268). Over the past decade, there has been exponential growth in a higher education programme that offers event management courses worldwide, particularly in the hospitality and tourism curriculum (Nelson and Silvers 2009:31). However, event-related qualifications, in general, are limited in South Africa, although there are several qualifications in disciplines such as tourism and hospitality, recreation, marketing, and sport management that cover modules or subjects related to events (Fenich, Hermann and Hashimoto 2012:45). In contrast to other related fields such as tourism, hospitality management, and project management that have existed in South Africa for a longer time frame, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) education is relatively new to the country's educational system (Fenich *et al.* 2012:41). In South Africa, the proliferation of business events has driven the development of academic qualifications related to business event tourism. These qualifications must reflect relevant content to meet the needs of educators, students, and the industry within the country. Partnerships between higher education institutions and the industry can play a fundamental role in advancing the development of social responsibility at universities (Venske 2016:2).

The meeting and event management sector in South Africa is integral to the country's tourism economy. It requires its personnel to possess academic qualifications to promote sustainable growth. The efforts of industry specialists and educational institutions must work cohesively to educate reliable professionals effectively. This will enable them to contribute to the economy's advancement and enhance societal development (Venske 2021:297). In event education, competency indicates that a student must be capable of applying Knowledge, skills, values, and abilities (KSVAs) to meet the complex demands encountered in the workplace. Sustainability competencies are related to KSVAs. These competencies empower students to think critically, encourage reflective thinking, problem-solve with integrity, become accountable for their actions, behave ethically, and have a sense of belonging to the community. It is possible to increase the application of industry knowledge and student engagement by providing professional event education designed to develop their reflective ability. It is, therefore, imperative that students develop sustainable practices and event management skills to build a sustainable event industry. However, for students to achieve success in the events sector,

planning and implementing a curriculum that will ensure students obtain the necessary knowledge and skills associated with sustainable education is required (Venske 2021:299).

Additional communicative language

In contrast to traditional universities and TVET colleges, foreign language is offered at the Universities of Technology, which is an additional communicative subject. At Private Institutions, it is offered as a linguistic subject covering communication in IsiZulu/ IsiXhosa. The language barrier worldwide is a colossal problem in the tourism and hospitality industry. Some believe that English is the universal business language and that it dominates other languages across the globe (Manaliyo 2009:1). The tourism industry's ability to thrive depends on highly competent personnel who are adept at mastering excellent communication skills to engage with clients effectively. As a result, the clients will be increasingly satisfied with the level of service delivered, which will lead to positive word-of-mouth as tourists continue to frequent the destination (Hass 2016:5). This theory of English's hegemony, however, is questionable in the tourism and hospitality industry; a more nuanced view is that employees in the tourism sector must be multilingual and multicultural to adequately respond and adapt to international tourism demand (Manaliyo 2009:1).

In the age of capitalism, the knowledge of foreign languages is now seen as a way for students to be competitive in the market, not only through communication but also by granting students "added symbolic power and prestige"(Ortner 2020:11). The language barrier continues to plague the South African tourism industry as some international tourists from France, China, and Japan have encountered difficulties communicating while visiting the country (Manaliyo 2009:10). Therefore, higher education institution has sought to include foreign language courses in their curriculum in order to prepare students to cope with the ever-changing dynamics of the local tourism industry (Ortner 2020:1).

Tourism is a highly information-intensive market in which businesses rely significantly on communication with tourists through different channels for marketing, promoting their products and building loyal relationships with their customers (Hass 2016:5). As a result, a growing number of tourism providers are marketing and selling their products in different languages other than English, this is an essential step towards acknowledging languages and cultures across the globe (Manaliyo 2009:1). The ability to communicate is pivotal to the success of any business in the tourism industry. English proficiencies are no longer sufficient to secure employment in this competitive tourism market (Hass 2016:3-4). It is indeed true that

linguistic diversity has become a valuable skill in the tourism industry, not only in determining the content of promotional and marketing materials but also when establishing and retaining successful client relationships (Hass 2016:5). First-year students may encounter difficulties in meeting the demands of the university system and the challenges of learning a foreign language (Ortner 2020:1). To fully understand the interrelationship between tourism and language, it is essential to engage and communicate with tourists from around the world. This is achieved through a deep understanding of how language impacts the tourism industry whilst simultaneously utilising a language that makes tourists feel at ease. Tourists visit the country not just to experience the various attractions it has to offer. However, employees of the tourism industry are also viewed as valuable assets when they can converse in the native language of the visitors (Haarhof and Hass 2019:2).

According to a study conducted by Hass (2016:3-4), in the view of Chinese tourists, South Africa cannot service this ethnic group in their native language, resulting in them being required to travel with their tour guides while in South Africa. The Chinese tourists who visit Africa are not as well-versed and fluent in English. In contrast to Europe and the United States, where there are many Chinese tour guides and signage written in their native language, Chinese signs are scarce in Africa. Language barriers remain challenging and prevalent for many Chinese tourists visiting South Africa (*ibid*). Has South African students attempt to adapt to the academic environment and gain access to concepts of translation, literature and ethnic studies, they sometimes find that they are ill-prepared for the challenges they may encounter in language acquisition at university (Ortner 2020:1). Therefore, when it comes to the role of the university in today's highly complex society, academics are assigned with the responsibility of preparing graduates for the world of work. They now realise that employment is not merely about securing a job but also adequately equipping students to develop their critical thinking and reflective abilities, which will enhance the student's capacity as a lifelong learner (Ortner 2020:11).

2.5.5 Work-integrated Learning (WIL) curriculum within the South African education system

Work-integrated learning has existed within South Africa's educational framework since 1979. WIL was first implemented at Technikons, now known as Universities of Technologies, during the 1970s and 1980s, with six months of academic training and a further six months of practical training (Reinhard *et al.* 2016:250). WIL has become a mandatory element within the South African tourism curriculum as a credit-bearing subject at UoT and Traditional Universities.

WIL forms the basis of practical evaluation that all students require to achieve a recognised qualification. This body of evidence requires students to submit reports, keep a detailed logbook, and present aspects of their practical experience in a portfolio of evidence as required by their education institutions (Kundasami 2007:38; Taylor and Govender 2017:108; Seager 2021:153). The benefit of WIL for students may only be realised after the successful completion of the WIL programme as the practical skills and training they have acquired during their work placement assists them in identifying career paths and setting career goals (Adegbite and Govender 2022:6).

Independent Institute of Education, Private College (IIE)

The Tourism Management Diploma is designed to enable learners to acquire the relevant theoretical knowledge and industry-specific competencies required to lead successfully, manage, and operate a team or department within a tourism organisation and establish their tourism enterprise. The program involves students completing in-service training in two-semester, which ends with students earning a National Diploma in tourism management if they meet all the relevant requirements. Upon completing this qualification, the learner will have an in-depth knowledge of the fundamental elements of tourism management. Students will also be able to implement this knowledge into practical approaches, ensuring that the proficiencies required by the South African tourism industry are developed. Learners qualified in this program will gain the expertise necessary to overcome difficult and complex challenges to operate successfully in tourism-related fields such as tourism management, marketing, and planning. Graduates can pursue careers as assistant tourism managers, tourism marketing associates, tourism development advisors, administrators of tourist destinations, tourism product managers, or tourism information managers. These would be exciting positions that will be available for them within tourism management (IIE Rosebank College 2021).

Technical Vocational Education and Training College (TVET)

The tourism management programme will equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the tourism industry. Studying this course may be an excellent option for those seeking to build the skills required to be effective and efficient in the tourism industry. The program involves students completing three certificates (N4-N6) and 18 months of in-service training, ending with students earning a National Diploma in travel and tourism if they meet all the relevant requirements. Graduates who complete their qualifications can engage with the tourism industry as travel agents, guesthouse managers, hotel receptionists, a consultant for tour operators, airport employees, and an entrepreneur (Northlink College 2022).

University of Technology (UoTs)

The National Diploma in tourism management is intended to enable students to acquire entry-level technical and specialised training in the tourism industry. The program involves students completing six months of in-service training, which ends with students earning a National Diploma in tourism management if they meet all the relevant requirements. Upon being certified, graduates will be well-informed about entry-level careers and equipped with the necessary skills to manage the daily operations of a tourism organisation. Through a blend of theory and practice, as well as an integrated work-based learning segment, the tourism programme provides qualifying learners with the knowledge and skills they need to be prepared to succeed in their careers. The program's objective is to ensure graduates meet and exceed the needs of the local, national and international tourism industries. A graduate planning to pursue a career in the tourism sector will have the option of becoming a retailer of travel products, a travel operator, a tour guide, a tourism educator, or a research and development enterprise (Durban University of Technology 2022).

Traditional University

Through the tourism management programme, students will gain knowledge and skills that will prepare them to be strategic leaders in regulating, supervising, and manage tourism enterprises. The program involves students completing 6 months of in-service training, which ends with students earning a National Diploma in tourism management if they meet all the relevant requirements. This qualification provides the student with a solid foundation for advancement into entry-level career opportunities and empower them to explore business ventures within this field of specialisation. It also paves the way for progression into industry leadership positions. In addition, this program equips learners with operational and management skills needed to work in the tourism industry after graduation. Students who are interested in pursuing a career in tourism may seek employment as a meeting and events manager, guest liaison managers, hotel management, tour group operations managers, tourism marketing managers, tourist information officers, and travel agencies managers (University of Johannesburg 2021:8).

According to Engelbrecht (2017:61), the National Department of Tourism (NDT) has collaborated with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to analyse the Tourism Human Resource Development (THRD) strategy, which requires a detailed skills audit of the tourism industry. The main aim is to facilitate and implement a new THRD strategy for the time frame 2016–2026. This meeting was organised by NDT in association with the Culture,

Art, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education Training Authority (CATHSSETA), with the assistance of the provincial Tourism departments and facilitated by the HSRC. One of the goals was to ascertain essential workforce skills that were required by the tourism industry (*ibid*). Therefore, the higher education system in South Africa had to devise a structured plan in addressing social injustice that resulted from students who gained access to educational institutions that were ill-equipped. There was a plea from the government to encourage higher education to impart the necessary skills and knowledge for students to attain a qualification and progress in their field of specialisation. A Qualification is the combination of learning outcomes with the incorporation of skills development. A qualification provides students the opportunity to progress their learning in tourism management, and it serves as a steppingstone for many as a way to secure employment in the tourism sector. A qualification must meet the stipulated objectives of the South African National Qualification Framework (SANQF). To achieve a tourism management qualification that will add value to a student's educational journey, higher education institutions must structure and collaborate with industry stakeholders to create a curriculum that is pertinent and responsive (Wakelin-Theron 2017:4). This will enable the student to be productive when the subject content is applicable. Higher educational institutions are therefore urged to shift their attention away from performance-based teaching and learning, to implementing a more innovative and creative curriculum. Thereby, prompting institutions to focus on developing holistic graduates for the tourism industry (Wakelin-Theron 2017:4).

2.6 Conclusion

Chapter two reviewed the corresponding literature relating to the objectives of this study. Significant content was explored to evaluate the effectiveness of the tourism management curriculum in UoTs. It is crucial to note for a graduate to transition smoothly from the university domain into the realities of the working environment, the support of the academic supervisor is very instrumental in the early stages of the student's WIL experience. The reviewed literature provided insight into the development and progress of education within South Africa and how it influences the local tourism industry. Therefore, educators and industry stakeholders within the South African tourism industry need to maintain a level of collaboration to ensure the content that is integrated into the curriculum is industry relevant. It is vital that students are adequately prepared with the fundamental skills that are required to operate successfully and confidently in the tourism industry. Students have unrealistic expectations of the tourism industry; it is therefore important that academics inform students about the demands and challenges that they will encounter. Tourism is predominantly a service industry and students

will be in the front line dealing with consumers daily, it is fundamental that higher educational institutions incorporate WIL as a module in order to instil valuable qualities that will allow students to function and operate efficiently.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to ascertain if the tourism curriculum at the Durban University of Technology is meeting the demands of the local tourism industry. Chapter Two reviewed pertinent literature regarding the development of tourism education and the importance of tourism education in South Africa, the essential skills and knowledge graduates should acquire during their theoretical phase, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and tourism education, the challenges of the WIL programme and the situation in South Africa were also discussed. This chapter described the methods and techniques employed in the data collection process for the research study. This study implemented a quantitative method through an online survey to gain data from graduates who completed WIL between the years 2015 to 2019. This chapter will conclude by focussing on this study's reliability, validity, and ethical issues.

3.2 Research design

According to Kumar (2019:154), a research design refers to a comprehensive plan which enables the researcher to answer the research question justifiably, accurately, objectively, and economically. Additionally, Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018:238) assert that a research design is a blueprint to direct the research process from the purpose of the research to achieve the desired outcome. Akhtar (2016:68) further highlights that a research design involves gathering and examining data to integrate the purpose of the research with economy and procedure. Engelbrecht (2017:77) describes the research design as the researcher's approach to generate participants (graduates) specific to the study and the methods used to collect data. This study will adopt a descriptive, quantitative research approach. The study by Felicen, Rasa, Sumanga and Buted (2014:45) used this design to get a snapshot of the participant's opinions. Creswell (2014:5) defines quantitative research as examining objective concepts by investigating the link between variables. These variables may be measured on instruments, so that numerical statistics can be evaluated using statistical procedures.

Descriptive studies are utilised to collect data that describe the characteristics of a person, event and situation (Sekaran and Bougie 2013:97). As this study is descriptive, it allows for the collection of accurate data and provides a clear picture of the phenomenon to be studied (Kuada 2012:45). Primary data collection for quantitative research can be acquired through questionnaires that are self-administered, mailed, web-based or telephonic surveys; it is often

associated with large-scale research (Kuada 2012:105). Quantitative research is a method used to examine objective concepts by investigating the link between variables to get results. These variables may be measured using specific statistical techniques so that numerical data can be evaluated using statistical procedures in order to answer questions like who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how (Apuke 2017:41). The researcher used a structured questionnaire in order to collect data for this study and the researcher anticipated that the collected numerical data would produce a fair outcome that can be generalised to the larger population. The quantitative research approach utilised for this study was suitable as it allows for investigating large numbers to illicit specific data.

3.3 Study Area and sampling frame

This study was located at one educational institution within Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) that offers a three-year National Diploma in Tourism Management. The researcher selected this area because it was geographically suitable. As KwaZulu-Natal promotes and supports the continued growth of tourism and due to the rapid developments in the local tourism industry, many students are considering furthering their education in tourism management, with the anticipation that they will become employable upon graduation (Govender and Waits 2017:51-52). Hence, this study aims to assess the tourism curriculum at the Durban University of Technology and its effect on the WIL experience.

According to Rahi (2017:3), a sampling frame depicts a sample of the target population to be selected for the proposed study. Etikan and Babatope (2019:51) further stated that a sampling frame could be a list outlining all the units in the population from which a sample will be carefully chosen for the intended research. Razack (2017:59) asserts that this will guide the researcher to select an appropriate sample size to collect information when examining problems to meet the purpose and aim of the research. The participation of tourism graduates in this research would determine the effectiveness of the tourism management curriculum concerning their WIL experience. The responses from these tourism graduates' provided insight into the tourism curriculum and its impact on their WIL experience. Hence, it was crucial to assess the curriculum's relevance, expediency, and ability to equip graduates with the essential skills required to succeed in the tourism industry. All third-year tourism graduates who completed their WIL training between the years 2015-2019 were selected to provide a conclusive overview of the tourism management curriculum in relation to WIL.

3.4 Target Population

Razack (2017:60) describes a population as a collection of people the researcher engages to obtain data for the intended research study. Sekaran and Bougie (2013:240) add that a population refers to all mechanisms, which could be individuals, objects, or events that may satisfy the researcher's selected criteria, warranting their inclusion into the study. According to Du Plessis (2015:96), a target population should consist of people with specific traits. The rationale for choosing tourism management graduates who completed their WIL training was to gain an overview of the tourism management curriculum and its impact on their skills and knowledge to operate effectively in the tourism industry. Hence, this study's population comprised of tourism management graduates that completed their WIL training between the years 2015 to 2019.

3.5 Sampling method

According to Mkhize (2017:33) it is not feasible and beneficial to survey the entire target population. The purpose of selecting a sample from the population is that it can make an inference about the entire target population (*ibid*). Including the whole target population will be time-consuming and unquestionably financially challenging for the researcher. Therefore, a sample is selected utilising different sampling methods to conduct an in-depth investigation into the population, after that using these results to understand a much greater phenomenon (Rahi 2017:3; Majid 2018:2). Mkhize (2017:33) states that there are two major classes to which sampling methods belong, which includes probability methods and non-probability methods. A non-probability sampling method will be employed to conduct this research. This study will use a purposive method where predetermined groups are available for the researcher to utilise. This method comprises a small subgroup of a larger population to be researched (Bamford 2012:65).

Using tertiary students is seen as a crucial element of the study in terms of understanding the effective alignment of the current curriculum with the demands of the corporate sector (Bamford 2012:65). According to Etikan (2016:2) purposive sampling method is the careful selection of participants relating to the information that they may possess. The importance of this method ensures that each element in the sample may support the intended research because each element would fall within the population parameters of the proposed study (Mkhize 2017:34; Razack 2017:62; Etikan and Babatope 2019:51). Therefore, this research selected tourism management graduates that have completed their WIL Programme to achieve credible results. The researcher obtained a list of tourism graduates from 2015 to 2019 that have

completed their WIL training from DUT's Examination Department. All 300 tourism students that completed their WIL programme from 2015 to 2019 were invited to participate in this study.

3.6 Sample size

A suitable sample size is fundamental concerning the confidentiality of data achieved, the larger the sample size, the narrower the error probability and the accuracy level is greatly enhanced. The sample size deemed accessible for this study were the 300 tourism management graduates that registered for the National Diploma in Tourism Management at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and who completed their WIL programme between the years 2015 to 2019. According to Jackson (2014:117), a population may comprise of participants that the study intends to generalise. Adopting the correct sample size is essential for an empirical investigation as it ensures adequate data is accessible to infer the whole population (Sekaran and Bougie 2013:261). The researcher will obtain a list of tourism graduates from 2015 to 2019 who have completed their WIL training from the Department of Hospitality and Tourism. These students will form the sampling frame for this study. A sample size of 106 tourism management graduates was achieved, of which 62 were female tourism graduates and 44 were male tourism graduates.

3.7 Data collection instrument

One of the critical elements in the data collection process is the identification of an appropriate data collection tool that can be used to elicit information such as beliefs, knowledge, ideologies, and behaviours from respondents (Engelbrecht 2017:81). Mkhize (2017:35) asserts that data collection is the process of gaining information from the selected sample who will be able to provide cognisance in response to the research problem that is being investigated. According to Apuke (2017:43), quantitative research can be categorised as a survey, experimental and observational research. Mkhize (2017:35) further suggests that researchers must be cautious, meticulous, and accurate when collecting data. Hence, if the data is obtained inaccurately, there will be discrepancies in the results. Questionnaires are the most common and reliable method of collecting data in quantitative research (Young 2015:168-169; Sharma 2022:2). According to Razack (2017:68-69), electronic surveys are considered a favourable tool in quantitative research as they permit larger quantities of data to be collected, reduce financial costs and increase participants' response time.

According to Engelbrecht (2017:87), a well-planned questionnaire can meet the critical objectives of the research, which in this study was an assessment of the tourism management curriculum and its impact on the WIL experience. The facilitation of questionnaires is instrumental in research if they are strategically structured and executed, mainly if the empirical study is comprehensive. This approach aims to evaluate participants' accurate data and views (Young 2015:169). Conradie (2012:54) further asserts that the researcher decided to utilise a structured questionnaire by carefully examining all the strengths and weaknesses of the different survey approaches and measuring instruments. Using an online questionnaire reduced the data collection time frame and decreased the financial cost of this research study.

3.7.1 Questionnaire design

A questionnaire is a set of questions that participants respond to either written, printed, or entered into a computerised system. Questionnaires are beneficial and invaluable for collecting data in descriptive research. The questionnaire layout should facilitate a simplified process of analysing and measuring the participant's responses (Razack 2017:67). Mkhize (2017:36) asserts that one of the essential benefits of implementing questionnaires in research is that participants can complete it in a time frame that is suitable for them. The validated questionnaires of Chen, Hu, Wang and Chen (2011:66); Conradie (2012:112-118); Jackson (2015:350-367); Mkhize (2017:153); Dwesini (2017:5-7); Sadikoglu and Oktay (2017:210) and Bello *et al.* (2019:2) was adapted and utilised in this study. Bamford (2012:62) states that adapting questions from comparable research studies has proven to be an instrumental tool in designing a questionnaire as these questions have already been tested, and re-testing is not essential. The informed consent letter in Appendix B was formulated for the online survey employed to collect data for this research. The cover letter introduced the researcher, justified the researcher's intention for conducting the empirical investigation and notified the participant that their contribution to this research study is on a volunteer basis. Furthermore, the researcher assured each respondent that their identity would be anonymous and that all responses would be strictly private and confidential.

Open-ended questions can enable participants to provide insight into critical concerns that the closed-ended questions could not further express. Using this type of question allows participants liberty and autonomy when responding to relevant questions without being biased and influenced by their evaluation of the tourism curriculum and its impacts on WIL. Therefore, the researcher included open-ended responses to validate the empirical study. This research study enlisted open-ended questions to elicit rich data for a comprehensive examination.

Closed-ended questions restrict the participant's choice in the online survey. It is beneficial as it is convenient, can be completed in a minimal time frame, and is simple to answer due to the pre-established selection of available answers and an alternative option of 'other' that is accessible as part of the close-ended question. Integrating closed-ended questions into the design of the questionnaire simplifies the process of collecting and analysing data. Hence, the researcher employed closed-ended questions to increase the frequency of participants' responses and decrease the time spent responding to the questionnaire. Five-point Likert scales were used for many close-ended questions. These scales are inexpensive, efficient, and instrumental in the administration and collection of data and permits researchers to gather data simplistically and coherently. The Likert-type scales are frequently used in survey questionnaires to evaluate observations and attitudes. The intention for implementing a 5- point Likert-type scale was to ensure the survey/questionnaire could be administered in a short time frame, enabling this study to be inexpensive, attainable, and feasible (Conradie 2012:55; Ho 2017:677; Rahi 2017:4).

In this study, the online survey format included questions that covered the objectives of the research. Section A focussed on the graduate's demographic information, and section B consisted of a Likert-scale questions on the graduates' experience and skills obtained through the WIL programme. Section C assessed whether the tourism management curriculum adequately prepared the graduates for WIL and Section D focused on perceived gaps in the tourism management curriculum. This was accomplished by using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from always (5) to never (1) together with open-ended questions to elicit a deeper, more meaningful perception of the gaps relating to the tourism management curriculum.

3.7.2 Pre-testing the questionnaire

The aim of pre-testing the research instrument is to determine if any errors may exist and assess the data's appropriateness. Pre-testing the research instrument supports the researcher in refining the questions and ensuring the questionnaire is free from ambiguity and bias (Mkhize 2017:37). Ismail, Kinchin and Edwards (2018:4) further explain pre-testing the research instrument assisted the researcher in identifying and resolving possible problems in the research process. All adjustments must be implemented before the final study to ensure consistency and reliability (*ibid*). Razack (2017:70) highlighted that participants employed in the pilot study should be equivalent to those who will represent the actual study as they will be acquainted with the topic and this will yield credible results. The links for the online questionnaire were emailed to the pilot study participants. This aided the researcher in refining questions, amending

the design and presentation of the survey, and facilitating a trial run of the online survey software. Furthermore, it also provided the researcher with an estimated time frame for completing the online questionnaire. It allowed the researcher to identify any challenges participants may have encountered during this process.

3.7.3 Administration of the questionnaire

Participants must be approached professionally and advised about the purpose of the research study. Moreover, they must be notified that their responses will be confidential, and their identities will remain anonymous (Mkhize 2017:38). Implementing an online survey can reach a more significant population in a restricted time frame. Furthermore, the researcher employed an online survey as it was the most appropriate method for gathering data from graduates who completed WIL and are no longer with their academic institution (Razack 2017:69). The online survey was designed using Google Forms. This online platform was beneficial, simple to operate, and provided the researcher with innovative features. Google forms assisted the researcher in compiling the online survey and forwarding the link via e-mail to respondents. Bamford (2012:60) asserts that one of the distinct advantages of utilising online questionnaires is the removal of bias in research, as the researcher does not directly influence the participant's responses since the researcher is not physically present.

The researcher obtained a list of tourism graduates from the Durban University of Technology. These students formed the sampling frame for this study. The researcher sent out an email inviting graduates to participate in this study; the email informed them about the importance and significance of this study. Participants were assured that their inclusion is voluntary, and their withdrawal from the study at any stage will be accepted. Participants were required to complete a consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the research process. Once confirmation had been received regarding the number of interested respondents, the researcher proceeded with the distribution of the online questionnaire. Follow-up emails and telephonic correspondence were sent to participants requesting weekly completion of the questionnaires. The more reminders that respondents received regarding completing the questionnaire, the more likely the researcher would receive a completed survey. A total of 106 graduates responded to the questionnaire.

3.8 Data analysis for the survey study

Data analysis entails processing, evaluating, and examining the results within the research process. The intention of assessing the data is to minimise the amount of data to an understandable form for the research problem to be explored to draw an inference (Razack 2017:76). The quantitative raw data will be analysed by a professional statistician using the latest version of the statistical software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26). Kaur, Stoltzfus and Yellapu (2018:60) assert that descriptive statistics is a process where the data collected should be concise and arranged systematically. In addition, descriptive statistics included frequencies, measures of central tendency, variance, and measures of association (Sekaran and Bougie 2013:278-285). The researcher employed descriptive statistics as a tool in this study because of the different categories of measurement scales utilised. Inferential statistics is a technique used to make inferences about the characteristics of a population based on the data obtained from a sample. Hence, the selected sample should specifically represent the population to achieve credible results (Razack 2017:76-77). The findings from the data analysis are illustrated in the form of comparative bar charts, tables and graphs in Chapter Four.

3.9 Reliability and validity measures

Internal validity refers to the degree to which the data collection instrument accurately measures and denotes the gathered data. External validity depends on the ability to replicate the data results in different contexts and research settings. Validity is crucial in research because it allows the researcher the ability to address the suitability, significance and effectiveness of the research study (Sekaran and Bougie 2013:351). There were two measures of internal validity that were utilised. Firstly, *face validity* is the extent to which the questionnaire will measure the objectives it intends to test (Conradie 2012:63; Sekaran and Bougie 2013:226). Hence, to determine the level of accuracy relating to the design of the data collection instrument, validated questionnaires were adapted from Chen *et al.* (2011:66); Conradie (2012:112-118); Jackson (2015:350-367); Mkhize (2017:153); Dwesini (2017:5-7); Sadikoglu and Oktay (2017:210) and Bello *et al.* (2019:2), in order to measure the truthfulness of this study's findings. Secondly, the researcher utilized *content validity*, ensuring the measuring tool includes reflective questions aligned with the study's objectives (Conradie 2012:63; Sekaran and Bougie 2013:226). Furthermore, pre-testing of the research instrument was conducted. A pilot study can aid the researcher in procuring reliable and valid data. Pilot studies can resolve possible

problems, ensuring the questionnaire is not ambiguous or biased, and all changes are executed to retrieve data to answer the research questions (Ismail *et al.* 2018:4).

Reliability is essential, as it shows consistency in the data and helps to validate the findings of the study based on the reliability of the data collection instrument (Sekaran and Bougie 2013:350-351). To measure the reliability of the study, the questionnaire will be continuously checked for completeness, consistency and clarity. Internal consistency is used as it is less time-consuming for the researcher, and there is a high degree of generalisation. To improve the reliability of the results and the response rate for the electronically administered survey forms, the researcher intends to send numerous reminders to complete and return the questionnaires. This will ensure that a low participation rate does not impact on the importance of the data collected and the perceived usefulness of this investigation. The researcher's critical self-reflection concerning the processes of data analysis and interpretation, coupled with the appropriate engagement in data collection, will also contribute towards ensuring validity and reliability in this study (Du Plessis 2015:100).

3.10 Ethical considerations/confidentiality and anonymity

Ethical considerations in research are based on the ethical principles of respect for people, beneficence and justice. They are put in place to ensure respect for the participants, protect them from harm and ensure fairness in the process of the research (Sekaran and Bougie 2013:162-163). The researcher adhered to the principles of research ethics and obtained ethical clearance from the Durban University of Technology before data collection. The Faculty of Management Sciences' Research and Higher Degrees Committee reviewed the research proposal, after which final ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee at DUT. Gatekeeper's permission was also from the Durban University of Technology. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher emailed participants the letter of information (Annexure A), which indicated the relevance of the study, the time frame allocated for the completion of the questionnaire to clarify any questions that might be unclear and will explain the procedure in detail. After that, the researcher distributed the consent forms (Annexure B), allowing students to either decline or accept their participation in this survey. Once the informed consent (Annexure B) had been completed and collected, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants.

3.11 Conclusion

Chapter Three presented the research design, study area and sampling frame, population and sampling method, measuring instrument, questionnaire design, pre-testing of the questionnaire, administration of the questionnaire and procedure, and data analysis for the survey study. The chapter also accounted for reliability and validity, ethical considerations/confidentiality and anonymity. Chapter Four will provide the analysis, interpretation, and descriptive presentation of the findings obtained from the online survey.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data and the discussion of the findings. The study's research objectives were to: explore students' experience of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in the tourism management program; to examine the extent to which the tourism management curriculum prepared students for WIL, and to ascertain if any gaps exist in the tourism curriculum concerning WIL. The empirical data obtained from the questionnaires were subjected to a selection of statistical analyses. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 26.0 software, and Excel, were used to analyse the data in this study. This chapter will present descriptive and inferential statistics using graphs and tables for the collected data. A detailed discussion and interpretation of the data will form a significant part of this chapter. The chapter begins by presenting findings and discussions of the study data related to the demographic profile of respondents, the students' experience of WIL, the tourism management curriculum, and the gaps in the tourism management curriculum.

4.2. Demographic profile of respondents

This section presents the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in this study. Variables such as age, gender, employment status and initial choice of study will be examined in this section.

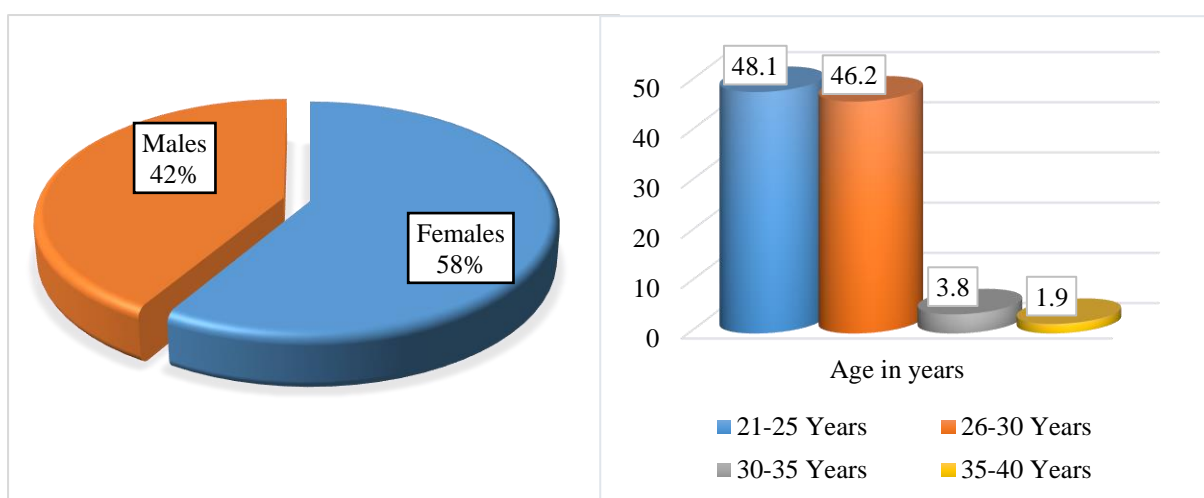


Figure 4.1: Demographic profile of respondents

The primary study was conducted utilising information gathered from 106 graduates of the tourism management program from the period of 2015 to 2019. The participants' demographic information is presented in Figure 4.1. The sample consisted of 62 female participants (58.5%) and 44 male participants (41.5%), whereby females are more dominant in tourism and hospitality programmes. According to Stemele (2019:37), there is gender inequality between male and female graduates as females tend to be more enthusiastic about a career in the tourism and hospitality industry than males. This has become a concern as many establishments seek the services of male students due to the labour-intensive nature associated with the industry (Seager 2018:59). However, a study conducted by Petrović, Jovanović, Marković, Armenski and Marković (2014:800) indicated that females also play a pivotal role in ensuring customer service as they display a sincere and friendly disposition towards clients. The data illustrated in Figure 4.1 further revealed that the average age of the tourism graduates who participated in this study was between the ages of 21 to 25 (48.1%) and between 26 and 30 years old (46.2%).

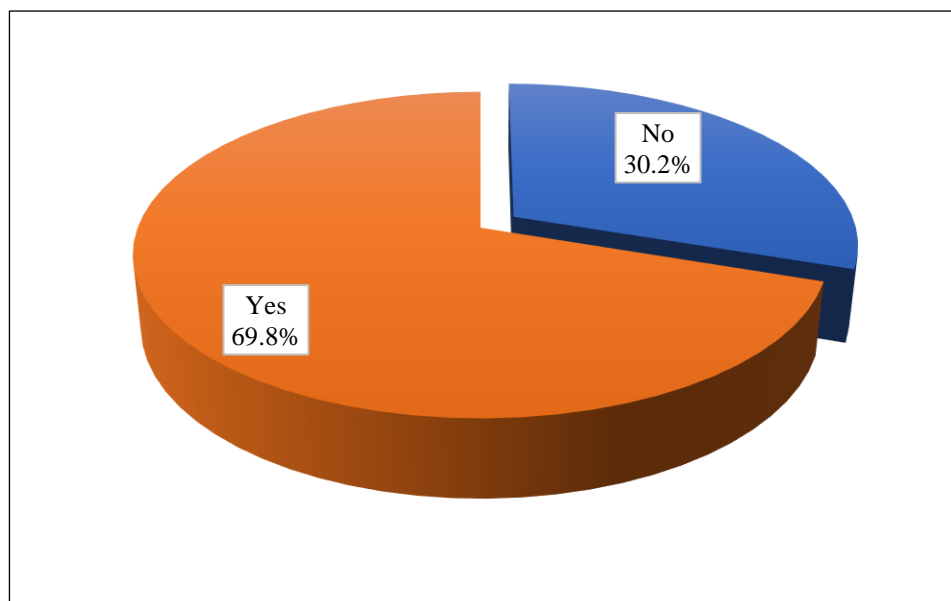


Figure 4.2: Students preference for 'tourism' as their first choice of study

The data revealed that 69.8% of the graduates confirmed that tourism was their first choice of study, which is depicted in Figure 4.2. The remaining 30.2% of the graduates indicated that tourism was not their first choice and were probably declined acceptance to study in the programme of their first choice and therefore chose to study tourism instead.

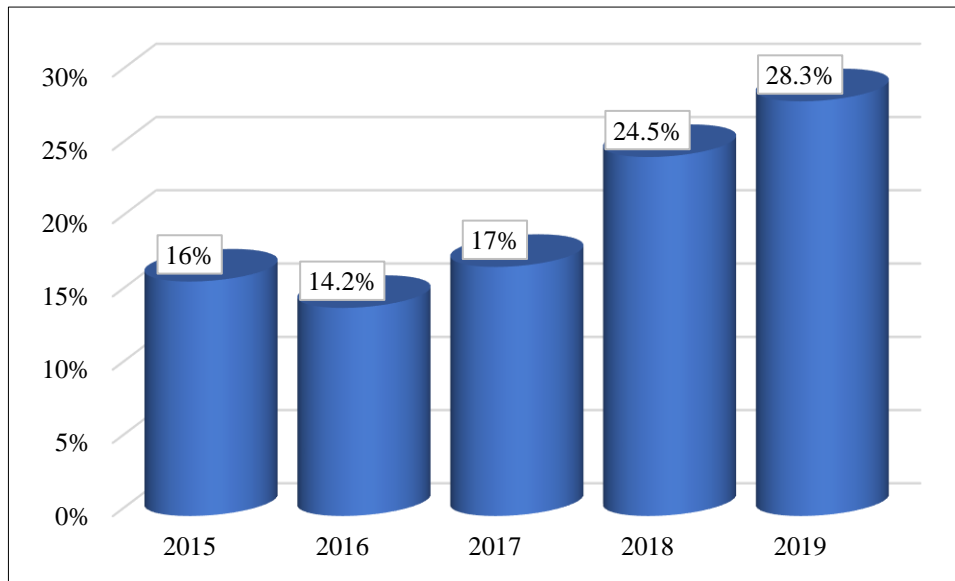


Figure 4.3: Year in which graduates completed the National Diploma in Tourism Management

The data in Figure 4.3 shows that the most respondents graduated in 2019 (28.3%) and in 2018 (24.5%). This may be attributed to the fact that some of the contact details for earlier graduates were invalid or may have changed.

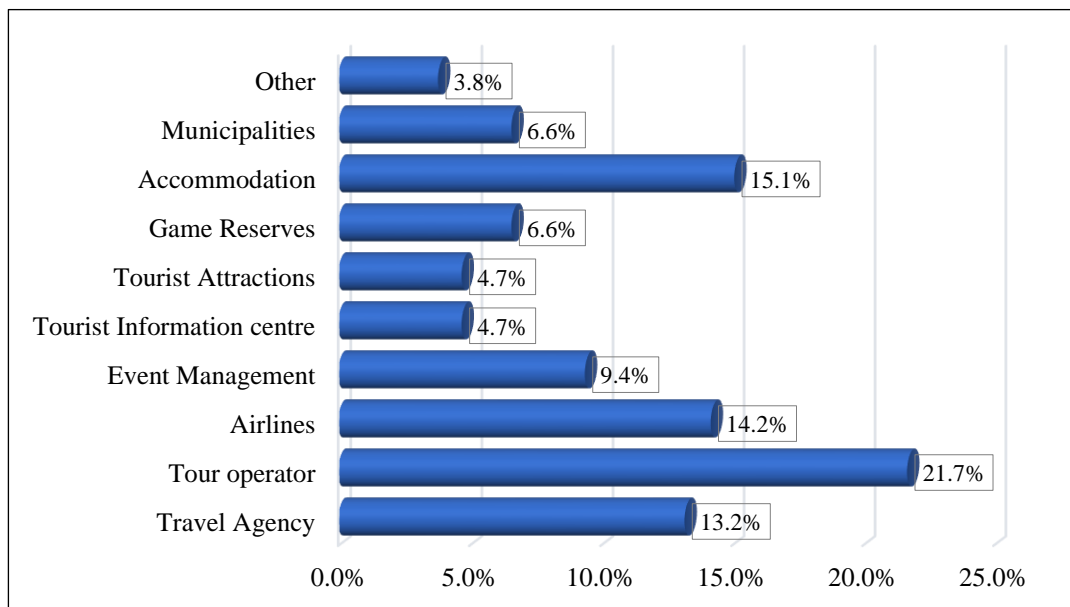


Figure 4.4: Sector in which graduates completed their WIL

According to Figure 4.4, most of the tourism graduates (21.7%) completed their WIL within the tour operating sector. The tour operator sector usually consists of three main stages: tour preparation, tour marketing, and tour administration. During the tour preparation phase, the tour operators are involved in researching to design new tour packages through negotiations with various suppliers. In the next phase, the tour operators will market tourism packages to travel

agencies and directly to tourists through printed media and online platforms. Lastly, tour operators facilitate the booking and reservations for these tour packages. Together, these functions comprise the tour operating sector (Razack 2017:24-25). Graduates that formed part of the study also engaged in WIL in the accommodation sector (15.1%), the airline sector (14.2%), travel agencies (13.2%), the events sector (9.4%), in municipalities and game reserves (6.6%) and in tourist attractions and tourism information offices (4.7%). Allowing students the opportunity to apply their theoretical learning in a workplace setting will develop their relevant skills through the daily interaction with employees, clients and management (Keating 2012:90). WIL can produce high-quality and well-trained graduates who will have a clear view of the direction they would prefer their careers to develop in thus thriving in their field of specialisation (Lu and Adler 2009:64).

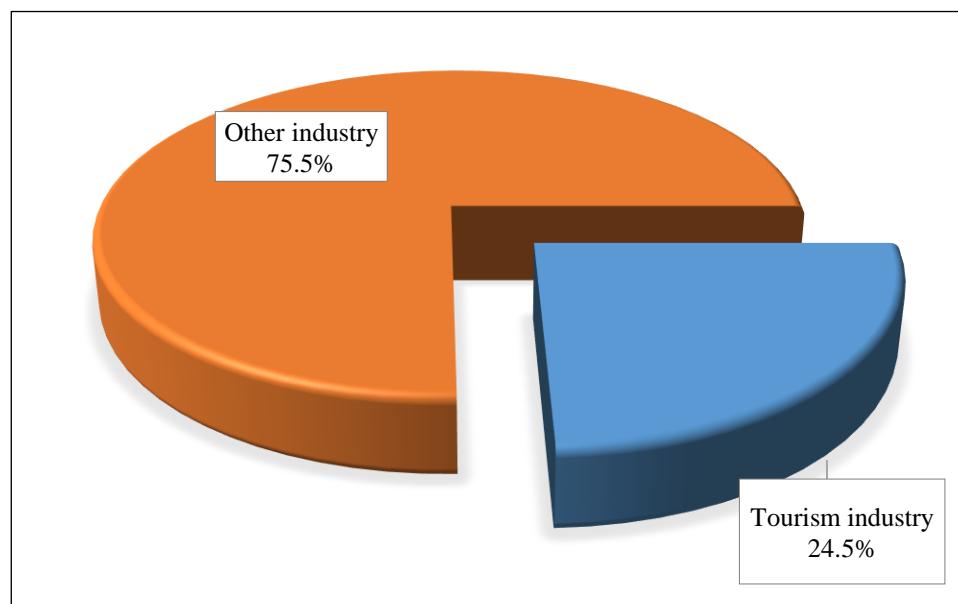


Figure 4.5: Current sector of employment

Figure 4.5 illustrates the percentage of graduates currently employed in the tourism industry. A large proportion of graduates (75.5%) that participated in this study are currently not employed in the tourism industry, while the remaining 24.5% have secured employment in various sectors of the tourism industry. Often tourism graduates may lack specific critical skills that impede their prospects of securing employment in the tourism sector (Yang *et al.* 2014:153-154; Ngwane 2017:4325; Ibrahim 2017:16; Singh and Jayakumar 2019:12). Moreover, Rosyidi (2021:42) suggests that after graduates engage in some form of work experience in the tourism industry, their perspective of a career within this sector may change. Some may view employment opportunities within the tourism industry as low paying, having limited career

progression, working under continuous pressure and lacking adequate benefits as reasons why graduates do not pursue a career within the tourism industry. Employment is then sought and secured in other, more lucrative sectors.

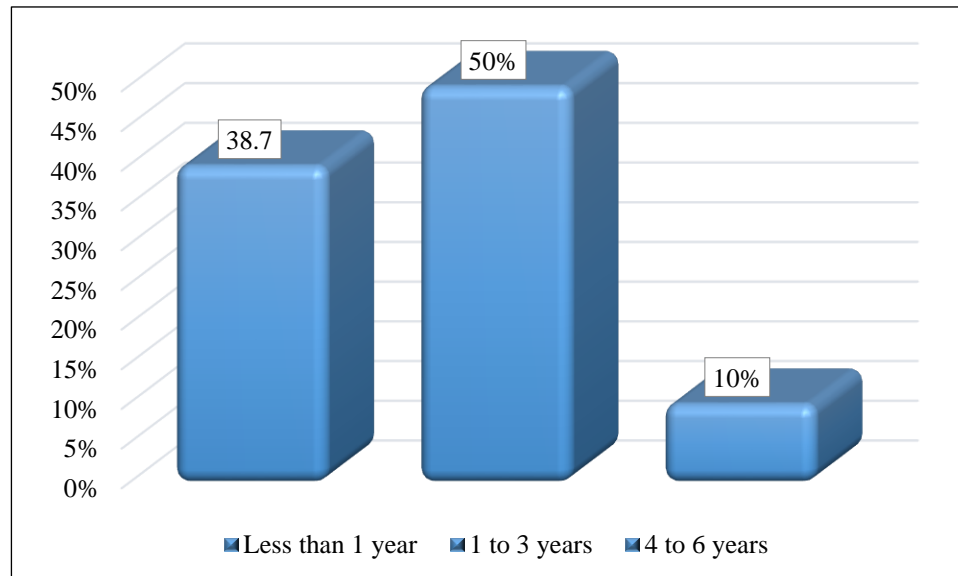


Figure 4.6: Graduates years of work experience

Figure 4.6 denotes the years' graduates have gained work experience within the tourism sector. The majority (50%) of the graduates indicated that they have 1 to 3 years of work experience, and 38.7% have less than one year of experience. The lesser years of work experience is because the researcher selected recently graduated participants from 2015 to 2019 as part of the study sample. A relatively small proportion of graduates (10.4%) indicated that they have 4-6 years of experience.

4.3 Students' experience of WIL

This section presents the student's experience during their period of WIL. It highlights various issues, such as the extent to which the curriculum addressed the skill set required by the industry, their ability to adapt to the working environment during their WIL engagement with the tourism industry and the different challenges they encountered during their WIL experience.

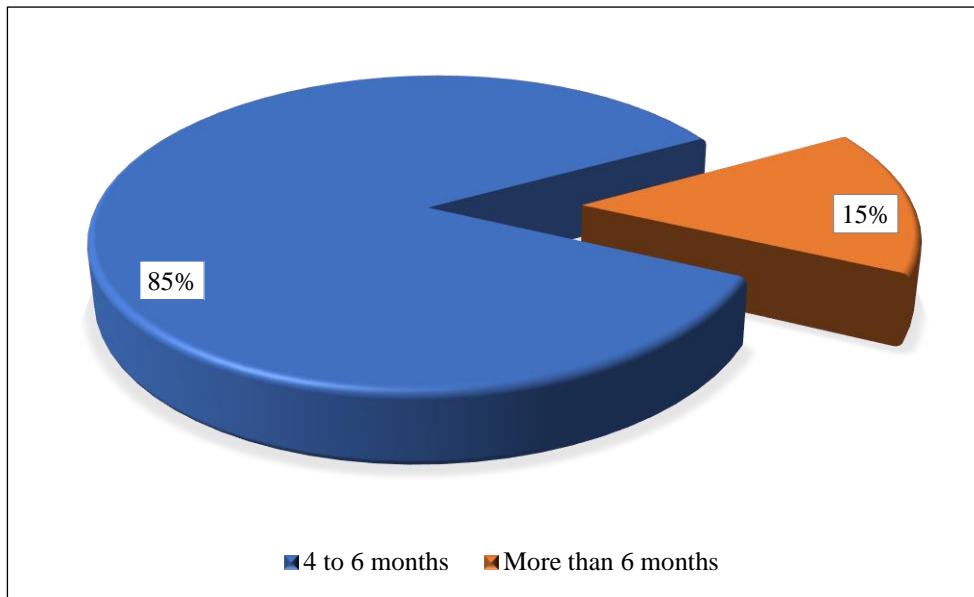


Figure 4.7: Duration of WIL

Figure 4.7 confirms the number of months graduates have gained practical experience within the tourism sector. Most (85%) of the graduates indicated that they have had 4-6 months of experience, followed by 15% who stated that they had more than six months in WIL. This may be due to some organisations commencing with WIL earlier or later than the start of the second semester. Also, some organisations may have considered the interview process, waiting period and induction procedure prior to the commencement of WIL as part of the WIL time frame. Students may have been requested by their host organisation to continue working beyond the six-month WIL programme, which may have been an agreement between both parties. The WIL component is generally completed within a six-month time frame. It is integrated into the tourism curricula towards the latter part of the student's academic qualification, which is deemed suitable by the education institution (Ferns and Moore 2012:208). Although, it can be argued that the tourism industry considers the time frame of six months insufficient for students to benefit from the realities of the working environment (Booyens 2020:835), Mavundla (2021:88) indicated that it takes approximately three months for students to become acquainted with the new environment and workplace etiquette. Ziegler, Chipanga and Magoda (2020:296) further noted that a six-month program might adversely affect students' learning outcomes and attributes since they will not have enough exposure to the working environment and the realities of the workforce. It was also stated that the six-month period would not suffice for evaluating the graduates' performance during WIL, which could weaken the learning process (Irwin, Nordmann and Simms 2019:18; Ziegler, Chipanga and Magoda 2020:296).

Table 4.1: The extent to which the curriculum addressed the following skills

SKILLS	1 Not addressed	2 Slightly addressed	3 Unsure	4 Reasonably addressed	5 Fully addressed	Mean
Thinking Critically						3.91
Observation	2.8	14.2	10.4	32.1	40.6	3.93
Analysis	3.8	13.2	11.3	36.8	34.9	3.86
Interpretation	.9	14.2	8.5	43.4	33.0	3.93
Reflection	3.8	7.5	19.8	37.7	31.1	3.85
Evaluation	3.8	9.4	11.3	32.1	43.4	4.02
Self-Awareness						3.97
Life-long learning	6.6	11.3	11.3	32.1	38.7	3.85
Career management	7.5	13.2	12.3	33.0	34.0	3.73
Higher level of thinking	2.8	14.2	8.5	29.2	45.3	4.00
Self-confidence	2.8	10.4	10.4	21.7	54.7	4.15
Self-motivation and perseverance	3.8	10.4	8.5	22.6	54.7	4.14
Communicating Effectively						4.17
Verbal communication	1.9	7.5	1.9	31.1	57.5	4.35
Public speaking	2.8	10.4	2.8	34.0	50.0	4.18
Giving and receiving feedback	2.8	8.5	4.7	34.0	50.0	4.20
Meeting participation	7.5	8.5	5.7	34.0	44.3	3.99
Written communication	5.7	10.4	4.7	19.8	59.4	4.17
Working Effectively with Others						4.18
Task collaboration and teamwork	0.9	8.5	2.8	25.5	62.3	4.40
Cultural and diversity awareness	2.8	8.5	7.5	23.6	57.5	4.25
Influencing others	3.8	12.3	7.5	30.2	46.2	4.03
Relationship building	1.9	9.4	6.6	24.5	57.5	4.26
Conflict resolution	8.5	8.5	6.6	29.2	47.2	3.98
Analysing Data and Using Technology						3.84
Information management	4.7	11.3	5.7	30.2	48.1	4.06
Numerical skills	5.7	14.2	7.5	39.6	33.0	3.80
Technological skills	7.5	14.2	8.5	26.4	43.4	3.84
Research skills	8.5	16.0	9.4	32.1	34.0	3.67

Problem-Solving						4.02
Decision-making skills	2.8	9.4	6.6	35.8	45.3	4.11
Analysing situations	2.8	10.4	6.6	42.5	37.7	4.02
Diagnosing problems	4.7	10.4	10.4	42.5	32.1	3.87
Identifying solutions	2.8	11.3	6.6	30.2	49.1	4.11
Self-Management						3.97
Self-regulation	6.6	8.5	6.6	33.0	45.3	4.02
Stress tolerance	7.5	14.2	9.4	38.7	30.2	3.70
Work/life balance	8.5	10.4	7.5	32.1	41.5	3.88
Time management	3.8	9.4	1.9	22.6	62.3	4.30
Social Responsibility and Accountability						4.01
Social responsibility	8.5	11.3	9.4	34.9	35.8	3.78
Personal accountability	6.6	10.4	6.6	34.0	42.5	3.95
Personal ethics	7.5	8.5	2.8	35.8	45.3	4.03
Social awareness and empathy	5.7	7.5	7.5	35.8	43.4	4.04
Honesty and integrity	4.7	5.7	5.7	26.4	57.5	4.26
Developing Initiative and Enterprise						3.83
Entrepreneurship	6.6	13.2	10.4	31.1	38.7	3.82
Initiative	5.7	13.2	10.4	38.7	32.1	3.72
Lateral thinking	7.5	11.3	11.3	34.0	35.8	3.79
Creativity	5.7	9.4	8.5	30.2	46.2	4.02
Change management	7.5	13.2	9.4	31.1	38.7	3.80
Organisational Awareness						4.22
Developing professionalism	8.5	6.6	2.8	25.5	56.6	4.15
Efficiency	5.7	8.5	3.8	30.2	51.9	4.14
Multi-tasking	2.8	7.5	4.7	27.4	57.5	4.29
Knowledge of organisation rules and regulations	2.8	8.5	4.7	21.7	62.3	4.32
Cultural knowledge	4.7	6.6	5.7	26.4	56.6	4.24

Table 4.1 presents the graduate's responses when asked to rate their level of agreement regarding the extent to which the curriculum addressed various skills, based on a 5-point Likert scale, with '5' being 'fully addressed' and '1' being 'not addressed'. The overall responses indicated that organisational awareness (mean=4.22), working effectively with others (mean=4.18), communicating effectively (mean=4.17), problem solving (4.02), and social responsibility and accountability (4.01) were skills that were most represented within the curriculum. The skills that were perceived to be the least represented in the curriculum were analysing data and using technology (mean=3.84) and developing initiative and enterprise (mean=3.83). The following data will examine the different elements of the skill set in more detail.

a) Thinking critically

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement regarding the extent to which the curriculum addressed the skill set of thinking critically. Table 4.1 displays the results for this data. The overall response from the graduates indicated that the critical thinking category was adequately addressed in the curriculum. An overall average mean score of (mean=3.91) was evident, which indicates a 'reasonably addressed' to 'fully addressed' response. The respondents were satisfied with the elements that encapsulated the skill of thinking critically, with solid levels of agreement highlighting that evaluation (mean=4.02) was considered the essential element, followed by observation (mean=3.93) and interpretation (mean=3.93). The ability to conduct analysis (mean=3.86) and reflection (mean=3.85) played a crucial role in developing this skill set. According to Lai (2011:4), critical thinking skills has developed into an essential component of student learning. Critical thinking is a globally recognised skill crucial for lifelong learning and career development. This allows students the ability to interpret data from the limitless information that is available and equips them with the necessary expertise to participate in the learning process with a greater understanding (Schmaltz *et al.* 2017:1). Murawski (2014:27) highlighted the importance of critical thinking skills as a tool that enables students to become both authors and the critics of new information.

b) Self-Awareness

Although the concept of self-awareness is of value, there is limited data that reflects the process in which educators facilitate this learning within the classroom. However, most of the graduates in this study highlighted that the category of self-awareness was effectively addressed in the curriculum. An overall average mean score of (mean =3.97) was achieved, which indicates a 'reasonably addressed' to 'fully addressed' response. The data revealed that all the elements that

encompass the skill of self-awareness were facilitated in a manner that was easy to comprehend, with graduates indicating the highest representation in the curriculum being that of self-motivation (mean=4.15), followed by perseverance (mean=4.14), self-confidence and a higher level of thinking (mean=4.00). Bobanovic and Grzinic (2019:86) suggested that educators must explore creative and innovative ways to deliver the course content in a structure that will engage and captivate the students during the learning process. Dole *et al.* (2016:3) believe that students can develop a progressive mindset instead of a stagnant one. Through the facilitation of stimulating learning activities, students will overcome any barriers and be confident in their abilities (Razack 2017:52-53; Law and Rowe 2019:92). One way of promoting a student's self-awareness is to cultivate an atmosphere of trust amongst students, allowing them to take risks in their pursuit to grow and nurture this skill. Another method that can be implemented is creating opportunities for students to grow through constructive criticism, thereby reinforcing the concept of self-awareness (Law and Rowe 2019:92).

c) Communicating effectively

Regarding the element of communicating effectively, graduates were asked to rate their level of agreement concerning the elements that make up this skill set. An overall average mean score of (mean=4.17) was identified, which indicates a 'reasonably addressed' to 'fully addressed' response. According to the data, graduates were satisfied with the level of training that was attributed to this skill, with graduates emphasising that a high representation was made in the curriculum with regards to skills such as good verbal communication (mean=4.35), the ability to give and receive feedback (mean=4.20), public speaking (mean=4.18) and written communication (mean=4.17). Kenayathulla *et al.* (2019:99) argue that modern-day employers have a level of expectancy regarding the employability skills prospective graduates should attain which includes academic and personal skills. The lack of graduate employability skills has been viewed as the missing link between academia, the training phase and the working environment (Suarta *et al.* 2017:337). The foundation of academic and workplace success is underpinned by the graduate's ability to be proficient in verbal and written communication, which contributes to workplace efficiency (Khan *et al.* 2017:1716).

d) Working effectively with others

Table 4.1 highlights that the skill of working effectively with others was perceived to be well represented in the curriculum. An overall average mean score of (mean=4.18) was obtained, which indicates a 'reasonably addressed' to 'fully addressed' response. The data shows that graduates felt prepared to engage with members of the working environment due to the training

they received on this skill. In particular, the skills that was most represented in the curriculum included task collaboration and teamwork (mean=4.40), relationship building (mean=4.26), and cultural and diversity awareness (mean=4.25) as elements that prepared them for the working environment and thereby bridging the gap between what is taught in the classroom and what is required by industry. Lastly, graduates agreed that influencing others (mean=4.03) and conflict resolution (mean=3.98) were vital elements associated with working effectively with others, and these skills were also addressed in the curriculum.

A vital employability attribute required of graduates in a globally connected and multicultural workplace is the ability to work with others, which is achieved through non-technical or generic skills. For example, graduates in Australia struggled with working effectively with culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse people due to a lack of soft skills that were not embedded sufficiently in their curriculum (Schech *et al.* 2017:1478). It is imperative that these soft skills are imparted in the graduates learning phase in order to improve the level of teamwork, combat the rapid pace of globalisation, create new avenues of dialogue in a cross-cultural setting and to retain talent in the workplace. This, in turn, will contribute positively to the success of the graduate's career (Succi and Canovi 2020:1836).

e) Analysing data and using technology

The use of technology and the ability to analyse data has become a component that organisations need globally. Therefore, measuring the quality of technological content offered within the curricula is essential as opposed to the number of technological tools/programming students have been taught. Analysing data and using technology was perceived to be well represented in the curriculum (mean=3.84). In particular, the skills that was perceived to be most represented in the curriculum with regards to analysing data and using technology was asserting that information management (mean=4.06), technological skills (mean=3.84), numerical skills (mean=3.80), and research skills (mean=3.67). Infante-Moro, Infante-Moro and Gallardo-Pérez (2019:202) asserted that technological functions have become a significant aspect of organisational structures worldwide. Therefore, higher educational institutions have included specialised training in their curricula. Including computer and Internet technologies in the learning processes provide a rapid form of communication and increases the effectiveness of the learning process, thus encouraging lifelong learning (Fathema *et al.* 2015:211). The correlation between the quality of technology and how it is implemented within the curricula is of vital importance in building students' employability skills (Lei 2010:455).

f) Problem Solving

A graduate's problem-solving ability is a vital skill that organisations worldwide require. Identifying, isolating, analysing and adopting correct measures may increase a graduate's employability. Therefore, attention was placed on the graduate's problem-solving capacity and whether this skill was integrated effectively into the curricula. An overall average mean score of (mean=4.02) was evident, which indicates a 'reasonably addressed' to 'fully addressed' response. According to the data in Table 4.1, most of the graduates who participated in this study highlighted that the category problem-solving served as a constructive tool during their involvement with the tourism industry, allowing them to perform tasks and duties independently. Decision-making skills (mean=4.11), identifying solutions (mean=4.11), analysing situations (mean=4.02) and diagnosing problems (mean=3.87) were skills that were perceived by graduates to be well represented in the curriculum.

According to Care *et al.* (2016:250), it is well documented that the transformations in the global labour force have shifted their focus from a graduate's academic qualification to the skills that an individual possesses. Organisations are now emphasising a new entrant's ability to demonstrate such skills as diagnosing and problem-solving and analysing and identifying solutions in the modern workplace (*ibid*). Problem-solving, interpersonal communication, and customer service orientation are areas of concern and therefore should be addressed and implemented in a graduate's curricula for them to function effectively in the workplace (McMurray *et al.* 2016:116; Jackson 2015:350).

g) Self-Management

A graduate's ability to manage their career and the success they will achieve is primarily based on their capacity to self-manage their academic and working careers. The data in Table 4.1 offered insight into the graduate's opinions on these skills, with many emphasising that time management (mean=4.30) and self-regulation (mean=4.02) were self-management skills that were most represented in the tourism management curriculum. Skills related to a balance between work/life (mean=3.88) and the ability to manage stress (mean=3.70) were also represented (to a lesser extent) in the curriculum. According to Clements and Kamau (2018:2279), graduates entering the world of work face various challenges in securing employment. The complexity and demands of the current labour market require individuals to become self-efficient and responsible for the growth and success of their careers. An imperative attribute of an individual's employability relies on the development of career management competencies which encompasses work/life balance, self-regulation, and the ability to secure

employment coupled with career success (Jackson and Wilton 2016:268-269). The attainment of such proficiencies assists graduates to be successful within both the academic and working domain, thus positively influencing a graduate's self-development and stress tolerance (Lent *et al.* 2016:47).

h) Social responsibility and accountability

Social responsibility and accountability have gained momentum in both the educational and socio-economic fields, contributing to sustainable business growth and community engagement. Graduates were asked to rate the level to which this skill was incorporated into their curriculum. An overall average mean score of (mean=4.01) suggested that this skill was 'reasonably addressed' to 'fully addressed'. As evident in Table 4.1, graduates rated honesty and integrity (mean=4.26) as essential elements in the tourism curriculum as these core values are associated with the industry. Social awareness and empathy (mean=4.04) and personal ethics (mean=4.03) were also viewed by graduates as essential elements which was adequately addressed in the curriculum. The graduates indicated that personal accountability (mean=3.95) followed by social responsibility (mean=3.78) were fundamental elements embedded in the curriculum, as it teaches graduates that within the tourism industry, there is a measure of accountability and responsibility.

Industry expectations have evolved concerning the skills and attributes required by new employees. Organisations now require employees to be equipped with the relevant knowledge and principles needed to enhance efficiency and competitiveness (Barrena-Martínez *et al.* 2015:410). Embedding relevant modules that encapsulate social responsibility values, ethics, and sustainability into the curricula, produces graduates that portray social awareness and accountability and who can operate with a higher level of integrity (Barrena-Martínez *et al.* 2015:410; Fleacă 2017:405-406).

i) Developing initiative and enterprise

The ability to innovate is an important indicator of economic and social development; increasing graduate capabilities to be creative and innovative and build entrepreneurial skills is vital for a young graduate's survival. The data presented in Table 4.1 shows that creativity (mean=4.02) was perceived to be adequately incorporated in the tourism curriculum. Moreover, entrepreneurship skills (mean=3.82) were also incorporated into the curriculum as this produces graduates that are adaptable and able to transverse in the ever-changing corporate

environment. Change management (mean =3.80), followed by lateral thinking (mean=3.79), and initiative (mean=3.72) were vital elements that were also included in the curriculum.

Entrepreneur modules can be viewed as a learning tool that enhances all academic programmes regardless of the discipline. These modules are intended to develop a graduate's ability to gain wealth through problem-solving and exploring new business opportunities (Edokpolor and Somorin 2017:144-145). In the twenty-first century, an organisation's success is determined by an innovative and creative workforce (Shu *et al.* 2020:2). Therefore, the core element of education should be the development of graduates for a seamless transition into the realities of the working world by instilling characteristics such as creativity, lateral and innovative thinking, productivity, and the desire to succeed (Edokpolor and Somorin 2017:144-145). The number of new graduates exiting higher educational institutions outweighs the number of jobs available. Therefore, embedded modules will assist the graduate in becoming self-reliant and exploring the concept of start-up ventures, contributing to a country's economic development (Rasiah *et al.* 2019:99).

j) Organisational awareness

Higher education institutions are viewed as incubators for future workforce development. Industry and society have demanded that these institutions produce ready-to-market graduates with employability skills and capabilities. An overall average mean score of (mean=4.22) deemed this skill as 'reasonably addressed' to 'fully addressed'. The data confirms that graduates perceived those specific skills such as knowledge of organisation rules and regulations (mean=4.32), multi-tasking (mean=4.29) and cultural knowledge (mean=4.24) were well incorporated into the tourism curriculum. Moreover, skills such as developing professionalism (mean=4.15) and efficiency (mean=4.14) were also evident in the curriculum. It is believed that professionalism and ethical behaviours cannot be formally taught to graduates but instead passively infused through their interaction with senior employees of an organisation (Govender and Adegbite 2021:106).

Mahajan *et al.* (2016:157-158) propose that graduates need formal training prior to their immersion into an organisational setting as these eases their assimilation into the corporate world. For graduates to be taught essential attributes, mannerisms and how to achieve their goals requires these components to be integrated and embedded into a structured and well-planned curriculum (*ibid*). Students' involvement often improves self-efficiency levels in learning and development training programmes. This gives graduates an increased level of self-

confidence when dealing with complex interviews and demonstrating their abilities in the workplace. This may subsequently be achieved by developing their cultural and social capabilities, interlinking with their academic skills to elevate their capacity and desire for long-life learning (Ibrahim and Jaaffar 2017:14-15).

Table 4.2: Challenges graduates faced during WIL

Challenges	Percent
The ability to balance WIL whilst being employed elsewhere	9.4
No compensation	34.9
Irregular/ long working Hours	38.6
No induction at the start of the WIL program	11.3
Lack of sufficient training on job functions	26.4
Difficulty in adapting to the organisational culture	9.4
Insufficient knowledge of technological systems (e.g., Galileo)	27.3
Lack of knowledge in undertaking work duties	9.4
Other	13.2

Table 4.2 depicts the graduates' responses regarding the challenges that they experienced during their WIL period. Graduates were allowed to list multiple responses to the above question. The data confirmed that irregular/ long working hours (38.6%) and no compensation (34.9%) were the two most frequently highlighted challenges that were seen as significant drawbacks in their WIL programme. The data further revealed that insufficient knowledge of technological systems (e.g., Galileo) (27.3%) followed by the lack of sufficient training on job functions (26.4%) were considered to be defining aspects that hindered the quality of their work placement and created a negative outlook in their WIL experience. Graduates were also challenged by the absence of an induction programme at the start of their WIL (11.3%), which affected their ability to immerse themselves in the workplace fully. Subsequently, graduates rated difficulty adapting to the organisational culture (9.4%), lack of knowledge in undertaking work duties (9.4%), and the ability to balance WIL whilst employed elsewhere were issues that impeded their progression during their active participation in WIL. The data showed that hand-delivering monthly reports were deemed tedious and time-consuming, experiencing conflict within the working environment with other members of staff, not being allowed to be creative or their opinions taken seriously and not being valued as members of the team had negatively impacted the graduate's experience, thereby restricting their growth and development during WIL.

Tourism is a labour-intensive and service-oriented industry that is reliant on human capital as a driver to boost profitability and competitiveness. One of the main challenges that tourism businesses encounter is the lack of industry-specific knowledge and expertise that graduates possess after exiting their educational institutions (Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2018:2; Bagheri, Baumb, Ebrahimi and Abbasia 2020:88). This may include difficulty in adapting to the organisational and social cultures, lack of sufficient training on job functions, and the lack of knowledge in undertaking work duties may impact the graduate's level of self-awareness, confidence, and their ability to perform effectively in the workplace (Rowe, Jackson and Fleming 2021:4). However, Wakelin-Theron *et al.* (2018:2-4) highlighted that knowledge of an academic subject would not allow graduates access to secure positions in the tourism industry as they need to have some form of training that will give them a competitive edge. Therefore, an organisation's commitment to training and development coupled with the knowledge the employee possesses will positively influence employee job satisfaction and the level of service delivered (Poulston 2008:414; Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2018:2-4).

The tourism industry is well-known for its ineffectiveness in accessing, training, and retaining employees who play a crucial role in the active engagement of daily operations within the industry. An organisational culture that delivers inadequate training produces below-par standards, increases staff turnover, and threatens profit gains (Poulston 2008:414; Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2018:2-4). Hence, Zwane *et al.* (2014:3) pointed out that a strong link needs to be forged between organisational strategies and training and development to reach the organisation's business goals. Eradicating any barriers to the training process for the organisation and encouraging a culture dedicated to a structured training framework will result in a pool of dynamic thinkers and highly trained and skilled human resources. According to Costa *et al.* (2013:141-142) many graduates have a misconception regarding their career aspirations within the tourism industry as it is stigmatised as a sector that offers minimal pay with demanding work hours, requires low skill levels and is often dictated by part-time and seasonal work schedules.

Employees are often required to work during holidays, weekends and late nights, which may impact their work-life balance. Suppose a graduate had a negative experience during WIL. In that case, they might have a negative outlook on the industry and, in turn, force them to seek employment in different fields outside the tourism sector (Anthony, Mensah and Amissah 2021:101-102). Farmaki (2018:51) suggested another critical challenge that graduates encounter is the lack of compensation coupled with poor incentive schemes, which negatively

impact the student's ability to excel, especially if they are working away from their home (Dwesini 2017:6).

However, Jackson *et al.* (2017:39) highlighted students must be made aware that not every hosting company provides a monthly stipend before they participate in WIL. The evolution of technology has shaped the tourism and hospitality industry for many years, which has determined how the industry operates (Adeyinka-Ojo, Lee, Abdullah and Teo 2020:114). Therefore, students must be equipped with industry-specific technological skills, as businesses worldwide rely on technology to remain competitive (Kubheka and Maphalala 2021:38). A potential threat to the tourism industry exists because of the perceived gaps between what is taught at higher educational institutions and the skills that are required by the industry (Nadkarni 2003:48). The preparation of students regarding the proper application of technological competencies and industry-specific software is one of the critical areas of the curriculum that must be addressed (Adeyinka-Ojo *et al.* 2020:115).

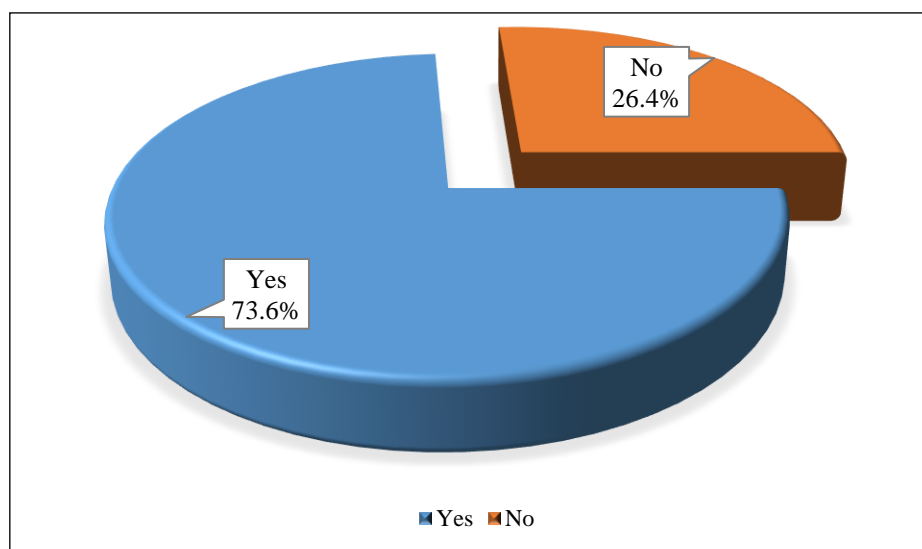


Figure 4.8: Graduates willingness to pursue a career in the tourism industry

According to Figure 4.8, majority of graduates 73.6% confirmed that they are willing to pursue a career in the tourism industry, whilst (26.4%) of the graduates, indicated that they are not interested in pursuing a career in tourism. Anthony, Mensah and Amissah (2021:101) state that graduates have differing views regarding their expectations of pursuing a career in the tourism industry. Some graduates will remain in the industry because they perceive it to be engaging, invigorating, captivating. Also, it allows them the opportunity to experience the authenticity of different countries, peoples, and cultures. Whilst other graduates indicated that the industry has

a high rate of employee turnover, lacks sufficient managerial and administrative training opportunities, has no career advancement, long working hours and low pay associated with this sector has influenced their decision not to pursue a career in the tourism industry (Ramakrishnan and Macaveiu 2019:41). Therefore, strategies need to be developed in order to meet the desired expectations of the graduates, as the lack of clear guidelines and the absence of student engagement with industry mentors can produce discontentment amongst graduates. This may lead to graduates developing an antagonistic attitude towards the tourism industry and subsequently force them to consider exploring employment options in other sectors in pursuit of better-quality working conditions (Costa, Breda, Malek, and Durão 2013:142). Wingrove and Turner (2015:211) proposed that educational institutions should play an active role in assisting graduates to maintain a positive attitude by providing a well-structured course design with industry specific knowledge which will support them in the workplace (Cord *et al.* 2011:163).

4.4 The Tourism Management Curriculum

This section discusses the data analysis on the relevance of the tourism management curriculum during WIL and in developing employability skills required for a career in the tourism industry. The following table presents the graduate's responses which were rated utilising a 5-point Likert scale, with '5' being 'extremely relevant' and '1' being 'not at all relevant'. In terms of the subjects and its relevance to WIL, the data shows that travel and tourism practice (mean=5.00), marketing for tourism (mean=5.00), communication (mean=5.00), end-user computing both theory and practice (mean=5.00) as well as events management (mean=5.00) were considered to be extremely relevant to the graduates during their WIL training. The least relevant subject for those graduates engaged in WIL was German (mean=2.35). The relevance of a subject is largely determined by the actual sectors in which graduates were placed during WIL. According to figure 4.4 majority of the graduates were placed in the accommodation, airline, tour operator and travel agency sectors. Therefore, subjects such as travel and tourism practice, marketing for tourism and communication were considered extremely relevant as these sectors require these subjects. However, graduates may have not engaged on a regular basis with German speaking clientele and therefore could not confidently apply their knowledge during their WIL training.

Table 4.3: The extent to which the subjects in the Tourism Management curriculum were relevant to WIL

SUBJECT/CONTENT	1 Not at all relevant	2 Slightly relevant	3 Neutral	4 Relevant	5 Extremely relevant	Mean
German	40.6	12.3	20.8	19.8	6.6	2.35
Pronunciation: Basic grammar	37.7	11.3	18.9	16.0	16.0	2.63
Functional grammar: Comprehension Vocabulary and spelling	38.6	15.1	17.9	17.0	11.3	2.49
Application of language in tourism	36.7	17.9	11.3	17.9	16.0	2.60
German cultural background and physical feature of the country	38.6	12.3	18.9	13.2	17.0	2.59
Tourism Development	5.7	11.3	15.1	41.5	25.5	3.70
Tourism attraction development and management	3.8	6.6	11.3	19.8	57.5	4.22
Impacts of tourism	3.8	6.6	11.3	34	43.4	4.08
Tourism policy and regulations	4.7	7.5	8.5	34	44.3	4.07
Geography of tourism	3.8	5.7	17	28.3	44.3	4.05
Sustainable tourism planning	7.5	7.5	11.3	26.4	46.2	3.97
Crises and disaster management in tourism	7.5	5.7	14.2	30.2	41.5	3.93
Tourism, global warming & climate change	8.5	6.6	12.3	27.4	44.3	3.93
Tourism Management	4.7	4.7	11.3	34.9	44.3	4.69
General management and administrative function	5.6	5.7	11.3	24.5	52.8	4.16
Purchasing and Production/service function	6.6	5.7	13.2	29.2	45.3	4.04
Service Strategy and Project Management	7.5	6.6	16	25.5	44.3	3.95
Introduction, motivation and economic environment	8.4	9.4	11.3	25.5	45.3	3.92
Financial and Human resource function	8.4	6.6	15.1	28.3	41.5	3.90
Entrepreneurship, Marketing and Public relations function	6.6	11.3	13.2	25.5	43.4	3.90
Business plan preparation	12.2	8.5	17	26.4	35.8	3.68
Travel and Tourism Practice	0.9	4.7	9.4	26.4	58.4	5.00
Customer Care	1.8	.9	5.7	9.4	82.1	4.72
Destination Knowledge	2.8	4.7	6.6	17	68.9	4.49
Tour operations procedures	4.7	5.7	9.4	19.8	60.4	4.29

Travel agency operations and procedures	3.7	8.5	7.5	20.8	59.4	4.27
Air Travel	7.5	5.7	7.5	20.8	58.5	4.20
Events based tourism	7.5	4.7	7.5	23.6	56.6	4.20
Tour Guiding	6.6	6.6	11.3	19.8	55.7	4.14
Hospitality Management	5.6	8.5	13.2	17.9	54.7	4.10
Nature-based tourism (Eco-tourism)	13.2	8.5	8.5	23.6	46.2	3.84
Marketing for Tourism	4.7	7.5	12.3	33.0	42.4	5.00
Consumer and organisational buying and behaviour	6.6	7.5	6.6	35.8	43.4	4.05
The SWOT analysis	10.3	4.7	11.3	22.6	50.9	4.02
Strategic marketing	8.4	6.6	10.4	29.2	45.3	3.99
Marketing information on South Africa	6.6	15.1	7.5	23.6	47.2	3.92
Competition analysis and strategies	9.4	5.7	13.2	29.2	42.5	3.92
The marketing mix	8.4	7.5	13.2	33.0	37.7	3.87
Environmental scanning	9.4	8.5	9.4	34.9	37.7	3.86
Market measurement and forecasting	6.6	13.2	12.3	28.3	39.6	3.84
Communication	.9	3.8	5.7	20.8	68.9	5.00
Listening skills	.9	.9	4.7	17.0	76.4	4.70
Oral Communication	.9	1.9	5.7	16.0	75.5	4.67
Communication process	2.8	1.9	5.7	19.8	69.8	4.55
Self-awareness	.9	1.9	9.4	21.7	66.0	4.53
Conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships	1.8	1.9	8.5	20.8	67.0	4.52
Cross-cultural communication	3.7	2.8	5.7	17.9	69.8	4.50
Non-verbal communication	3.7	2.8	5.7	20.8	67.0	4.48
General Business Writing	3.7	1.9	7.5	20.8	66.0	4.47
Perception	2.8	3.8	8.5	20.8	64.2	4.43
Barriers	2.8	5.7	8.5	22.6	60.4	4.35
Models	4.7	2.8	10.4	27.4	54.7	4.28
End-user computing (theory)	.9	1.9	6.6	21.7	68.8	5.00
Computer basics	1.8	2.8	7.5	18.9	68.9	4.53

Components of a computer system	4.7	2.8	10.4	19.8	62.3	4.35
Input / output devices	4.7	2.8	12.3	22.6	57.5	4.29
Concepts of data and data files	4.7	3.8	8.5	22.6	60.4	4.33
Managing data	4.7	3.8	7.5	27.4	56.6	4.30
Storage devices	4.7	6.6	9.4	22.6	56.6	4.23
Computer performance issues	4.7	5.7	9.4	20.8	59.4	4.28
Operating systems, applications and software development	7.5	6.6	9.4	23.6	52.8	4.10
Licences, security and networks	5.6	10.4	16.0	25.5	42.5	3.91
Internet and the Information superhighway	5.6	6.6	7.5	26.4	53.8	4.19
Case studies	7.5	9.4	12.3	27.4	43.4	3.92
End-user computing (practical)	2.8	.9	6.6	21.7	67.9	5.00
Record, file and database management programs	1.8	3.8	6.6	18.9	68.9	4.52
Word-processing	1.8	4.7	5.7	21.7	66.0	4.49
Operating system commands and file management	2.8	4.7	6.6	21.7	64.2	4.43
Spreadsheets and graphics	1.8	8.5	6.6	18.9	64.2	4.38
Events Management	10.4	4.7	15.1	33.0	36.7	5.00
Introduction to events	14.1	8.5	12.3	29.2	35.8	3.67
The event planning process and procedure	14.1	5.7	12.3	30.2	37.7	3.74
Human resource	12.2	12.3	13.2	30.2	32.1	3.60
Introduction to events	14.1	8.5	12.3	29.2	35.8	3.67

a) German

According to Table 4.3, the graduates acknowledged that German was not a relevant subject in their curriculum and did not assist them in obtaining professional skills whilst at WIL. An overall mean score of (mean=2.35) was identified, which indicated that the graduates did not validate German to be pertinent to their curricula. Table 4.3 further illustrated the graduate's view regarding the content/units within the German curriculum and if it was applicable during WIL. Pronunciation: basic grammar (mean=2.63), followed by application of language in tourism (mean=2.60), German cultural background and physical feature of the country (mean=2.59), and functional grammar: comprehension vocabulary and spelling (mean=2.49). These components were clearly not rated as important during their interaction with the tourism industry. This could be because graduates were not adequately equipped with the relevant knowledge and therefore could not display self-confidence in applying this knowledge during their WIL training. Additionally, there is also the possibility that the host organizations where students participated during WIL may have contributed to the lack of appreciation for German in the tourism management curriculum as the application of the language may have not been required.

Tourism is a global industry that is dependent on the interactions between local communities and foreign tourists and the ability to communicate in multiple foreign languages is a prerequisite (Sindik and Božinović 2013:1; Satghare, Ragde and Rao 2014:1; De Carlos, Alén, Pérez-González and Figueroa 2019:133). The capacity to understand and comprehend a foreign language is vital as tourists travel from around the world with different cultural background (Garipova 2017:355). Communication is paramount as it serves as the first contact point between clients and service providers and in this regard, tour guides and tour operators must possess the skills to develop intercultural dialogue in order to contribute to the tourist overall experience (Sindik and Božinović 2013:1).

For graduates pursuing careers within tourism, the mastery of foreign languages is vital. The knowledge of a foreign language will assist tourism specialists to communicate with clients in their preferred language, be aware of the tourist's cultural background and will afford them an opportunity to gain a competitive edge over co-workers that converse primarily in English. Tour companies that employ staff that have command over a foreign language often build a good reputation with foreign tourist, which has a positive impact on the quality of service offered (Garipova 2017:355; De Carlos *et al.* 2019:133; Harahap 2020:817). Satghare *et al.* (2014:1) study highlighted that the most preferred foreign languages within the tourism sector

were German, Spanish and Japanese. Due to the competitive nature of the tourism industry, employees are challenged to bridge the gap between communicative and intercultural barriers that is ever present within the tourism industry (Tomić and Čolić 2019:100). Learning foreign languages is key in enhancing learners' future careers. It unlocks an array of professional opportunities for those who have the ability to grasp the vocabulary of that language. German is a widely spoken language across Europe and the need for multilingual tourist specialists has become ever increasing. The two main concepts of vocabulary is the formation of sentences and the expression of thoughts in both written and spoken mediums. The way in which an individual utilizes their vocabulary portrays how skilled they are in the language. It is therefore beneficial for graduates who want to pursue a career in tourism to embrace the concept of learning foreign languages as this will improve their employment prospects as specialist within the field (Arredondo, Zapatero, Naranjo and López-Guzmán 2018:438; Harahap 2020:817-818).

b) Tourism Development

An overall mean score of (mean =3.70) was recorded in the data, which suggested that the subject tourism development was 'relevant' to 'extremely relevant'. The graduates indicated that tourism development was crucial to their learning during their WIL experience. The graduates were also required to respond to the relevance of the content/units within the tourism development curriculum and if it was adequately addressed. The majority of the graduates who participated in this study indicated that tourism attraction development and management (mean=4.22) was a relevant component that aided them during their WIL training, followed by impacts of tourism (mean=4.08), tourism policy and regulations (mean=4.07) and geography of tourism (mean=4.08), which graduates highlighted had contributed to their professional development. The graduates viewed sustainable tourism planning (mean=3.97) as a significant factor during their engagement with the industry. Regarding crises and disaster management in tourism (mean=3.93) and tourism, global warming and climate change (mean=3.93), graduates implied that this component was relevant and beneficial during WIL.

With a worldwide focus on responsible tourism, graduates need to possess the essential skills and knowledge required to combat the burning issues of development and sustainability (Hales and Jennings 2017:185). Tourism development and planning play an integral role in strategic decision-making. They must be implemented sustainably to aid in the growth of social, economic and environmental benefits during the development process (Saarinen, Rogerson and Hall 2017:308; Amerta, Sara and Bagiada 2018:249). Zagonari (2019:6) further suggested that

educational approaches to tourism development must align with policies on sustainability and consider local and international trends, allowing businesses to anticipate future tourism demands. This will aid tourism educational frameworks to produce a well-educated and skilled workforce dedicated to the practices and principles of development and sustainability (Saarinen *et al.* 2017:308).

c) Tourism Management

As seen from table 4.3, the graduates answered mostly in favour of the relevance of tourism management as a subject in their curriculum. An overall mean score of (mean=4.69) was recorded in the data, which suggested that the subject tourism management was 'relevant' to 'extremely relevant'. The graduates indicated that tourism management helped them become active and responsible learners during their learning process in WIL. The data also revealed the graduate's responses regarding the relevance of the content/units within the tourism management curriculum as it was relevant and easy to comprehend while simultaneously enhancing the graduate's level of learning. Hence (mean=4.16) indicated that general management and administrative function were relevant to the curriculum. Whereas purchasing and production/service function (mean=4.04), service strategy and project management (mean=3.95), followed by the introduction, motivation and economic environment (mean=3.92), were recognised by the graduates as obtaining the necessary knowledge and developing industry-specific skills that would have aided their assimilation into the world of work. Regarding financial and human resource function and entrepreneurship, marketing and public relations function scored a mean of (mean=3.90), indicating its relevance in the curriculum. Subsequently, business plan preparation (mean=3.90) aided graduates in benefiting from the intended learning outcomes, which enhanced their performance and growth.

Organisations worldwide have identified human capital as a valuable resource that drives businesses to achieve operational success (Hsu 2018:181). However, graduates who may possess traditional management capabilities, such as marketing, finance, and human capital, may no longer be adequately prepared for the complexities of the workplace. One of the essential approaches utilised by organisations in maintaining a competitive edge is the use of project management systems, and this strategy is widely employed by businesses globally to grow their business value. However, many projects do not reach their maximum potential due to the uncertainties that may arise because of a lack of knowledge in comprehending specialised processes, the inability to identify potential threats to production and the failure to recognise previous setbacks (Marinho, Sampaio and Moura 2018:157-158; Makarova, Shubenkova and

Pashkevich 2018:2). One of the ways to address these uncertainties is through the effective use of human capital, whereby the focus shifts from production and consumption to providing services based on individuals' preferences and requirements which will result in the efficient execution of the organisation's service strategy (Paulišić, Tanković and Hrvatin 2016:236). Human resource drives the process which links both individual and business goals, such as pricing, promotion, productivity, customer retention, distribution and financial performance (Makarova *et al.* 2018:2). The shift from a structured and controlled market to a more open market creates the need for businesses to promote suitable purchasing strategies. One of the leading concerns regarding purchasing is the quality-related decisions that impact the end product/service and the organisation's performance. Therefore graduates need to have an understanding of how to interpret market trends and analyse business data in order to make informed decisions (Lalić, Delić, Simeunović, Tasić and Cvetković 2019:816).

d) Travel and Tourism Practice

According to the data illustrated in Table 4.3, the graduates ranked travel and tourism practice as a relevant subject in their curriculum. An overall mean score of (mean=5.00) indicated that graduates felt this subject equipped them with the necessary skill set to excel in the tourism industry. Table 4.3 further depicts the graduate's view regarding the content/units within the travel and tourism practice curriculum and its relevance. Customer care (mean=4.72) was perceived by graduates as extremely relevant, and they were able to apply the skills and knowledge gained at an operational level within a tourism establishment. Graduates agreed that destination knowledge (mean=4.49) was a vital component that allowed them to integrate their disciplinary knowledge and skills during WIL, resulting in more enriched learning. Tour operations procedures (mean=4.29), travel agency operations and procedures (mean=4.27), air travel (mean=4.20) and events-based tourism (mean=4.20) were all closely related and therefore were given high mean scores regarding their relevance within the travel and tourism practice curriculum. Also, the graduates were required to gauge whether nature-based tourism (eco-tourism) (mean=3.84) was a vital component within the curricula, graduates indicated that it was relevant, and this permitted them to transition from being a student to a career-minded graduate as this component added a level of diversity to the tourism management qualification.

The consistent growth of tourism has prompted destinations globally to find innovative ways to promote their attractions to tourists and improve tourism industry competitiveness. For destinations to maintain a competitive edge, products and offerings should satisfy tourist expectations in one or more segments of the tourism sector (García-Almeida 2019:409). One

of tourism's most rapidly growing sectors is nature-based or eco-tourism. Destinations that offer cultural and natural attractions are gaining momentum and are well-positioned to capitalise on this type of tourist demand. South Africa boasts cultural and natural attractions and is well-positioned to grow in tourism. Therefore, higher education institutions (HEIs) providing tourism programmes equip graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills to encourage sustainability and conservation through their responsible practices (Bouwer, Geldenhuys, Hermann and Taylor 2021:1-3). Thus the introduction of nature-based modules into the tourism curricula gives students a broader awareness of preservation and the ability to use natural resources responsibly as tourism progresses (Zhang, Wang, Wang, Li and Zhang 2021:3). Tourism worldwide generates employment opportunities for millions of people within travel agencies and tour operators, yet suitably trained human resources are absent within these specialised sectors (Dhiman 2012:359-360).

According to Wakelin-Theron *et al.* (2018:8-9), customer service/awareness and ethical conduct at work are considered beneficial to both the industry and individual growth as it contributes to the long-term viability of the tourism sector. Therefore, it is essential to understand how the curriculum of higher education institutions (HEIs) aligns with the skills, concepts and theories required by graduates to effectively cope with industry expectations, as tourism is seen as a panacea to youth unemployment in South Africa. In order to prepare tourism graduates to excel in their chosen careers, students are urged to familiarise themselves with the different reservation systems utilised within the tourism industry (*ibid*). HEI can create competitive students by preparing them with the relevant training on Global Distribution Systems (GDS) and Amadeus Reservation System (ARS), which are widely used throughout the tourism industry. Travel and Tourism programmes should integrate these systems into the curriculum as many graduates find placement for their workplace training in tour operations and travel agency segments of the tourism industry (Barcenas, Capuno, Silang, Kent and Calinao 2015:225). The value that GDS and ARS have is that it is compatible with various other innovative technologies and understanding how to create customised service experiences will help provide more value for both customers and employees (Shin, Perdue and Kang 2019:311).

e) Marketing for Tourism

Table 4.3 revealed the data relating to the relevance of marketing for tourism as a subject in their curriculum. An overall mean score of (mean=5.00) was achieved, indicating the importance of marketing for tourism as a subject in their curriculum. This assisted graduates in

transferring their knowledge in the classroom into learning opportunities during WIL. Table 4.3 further demonstrated that the data relating to the content/units within the marketing for tourism curriculum were relevant and added value to the curriculum. Thus, most graduates highlighted that consumer and organisational buying and behaviour (mean=4.05) and the SWOT analysis (mean=4.02) were highly relevant components in the curriculum, as this broadened their understanding of tourism business operations. Strategic marketing (mean=3.99), followed by marketing information on South Africa (mean=3.92) and competition analysis and strategies (mean=3.92), were essential components of the curriculum. Finally, graduates were required to determine whether marketing mix (mean=3.87), environmental scanning (mean=3.86) and market measurement and forecasting (mean=3.84) were crucial components within the curricula. The graduates proposed that it was relevant to the demands of the working environment and positively influenced their learning during WIL.

The tourism industry, over a decade, has experienced exponential growth and its impact on the local environment, community, and traditional aspects has called for a deeper understanding of sustainability (Pomering, Noble and Johnson 2011:953). As tourism drives economic growth, businesses continuously transform to remain up-to-date and relevant in the marketplace. Therefore, higher education institutions should develop curriculum content that adequately addresses current and future industry expectations, allowing graduates to develop and excel in their chosen careers (Cheng, Lourenço and Resnick 2016:496). One of the current tools tourism businesses employs is the strategic process of market planning in conjunction with the marketing mix, which is said to improve sustainability within this sector (Pomering *et al.* 2011:954). The high levels of domestic and international tourist flows need to be continually monitored to create up-to-date models and forecasting for the increased tourist demands within destination regions. Some key components that should be considered when developing tourism demand models are tourist revenue, exchange rates, destination rates and those of competitors. This knowledge will increase the graduate's ability to analyse data and calculate the degree to which they impact tourist demand (*ibid*).

This type of data influences governmental agendas and strategic planning for tourism businesses. Hence including modelling and forecasting modules within the current tourism curriculum is essential (Assaf, Li, Song, and Tsionas 2019:387-388). By having a greater understanding of tourist flow and interpreting data from forecasting and modelling tools, marketers need to consider the marketing activities that must be implemented to capture a specific market with a product/service. One of the widely used frameworks is the marketing

mix which guides the decision-making process to create products/services that are sustainable. Service-oriented businesses advocate for graduates to be equipped with the fundamental knowledge and skills in the area of current tourism marketing to grow the tourism industry (Pomering, Johnson and Noble 2010:955). Due to the relative similarities between products/services within the tourism sector, businesses need to seek out innovative ways to diversify their product to remain competitive and viable within the tourism market. New developmental strategies and approaches must be applied to service marketing as some of the existing structures and objectives from the manufacturing market are not as influential within the service industry. Service marketing requires developing strategic approaches, drawing on traditional principles specifically designed for the service industry. By including specific content within the tourism curriculum, graduates will benefit as they will have a holistic view of marketing from both the manufacturing and service industries outlook (Paulišić *et al.* 2016:236).

The tourism sector is regarded as a highly competitive and complex environment influenced by myriad external factors. Organisations with a competitive edge are invested in gathering relevant knowledge that can be developed to manage business practices. Environmental scanning assists organisations in recognising and reacting to external events and trends through the collection, analysis and processing of data. This is done to develop operational strategies and apply tactical solutions to capitalise in areas of the market that are yet to be exploited (Aldehayyat 2015:460; Köseoglu, Morvillo, Altin, De Martino and Okumus 2019:239). Another tool utilised by tourism organisations during the strategic planning process is the use of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. A SWOT analysis is a framework designed to assess an organisation's internal strengths and weaknesses against external opportunities and threats. This technique incorporates the business's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to find a suitable solution to a particular problem. A SWOT analysis allows a business to develop a strategic action plan from information gathered through monitoring, diagnostics and informed decision-making. Graduates entering this highly competitive environment should understand the concept of environmental scanning and the value of a SWOT analysis, as their knowledge directly impacts the competitiveness of the business (Lawton and Weaver 2009:68; Jonibek 2021:135).

f) Communication

According to Table 4.3, the graduate has categorised communication as a relevant subject in their curriculum. An overall mean score of (mean=5.00) was identified, which indicated that

the graduates acknowledged communication as a valuable component in their academic phase. Since the graduates had knowledge of communication, they could apply theory to a practical application more proficiently and develop essential skills as part of their career development. Table 4.3 further illustrates the graduate's view regarding the content/units within the communication curriculum. Listening skills (mean=4.70) and oral communication (mean=4.67) received the highest score as graduates highlighted that these components were crucial during their interaction with the tourism industry. As a result, this improved their ability to deal with the complexities of the workplace more effectively, thereby improving their learning outcomes. This was followed closely by the communication process (mean=4.55), self-awareness (mean=4.53), conflict resolution (mean=4.52), and cross-cultural communication (mean=4.50). This may be due to the strong correlation between what was taught in the classroom and what was learned in the workplace, as evidenced by the graduates' confidence in their responses. Graduates were then requested to assess the importance of general business writing (mean=4.47), non-verbal communication (mean=4.48), perception (mean=4.43), barriers (mean=4.35) and models (mean=4.28). The data reflected that graduates were in favour of these components being included in their curriculum.

Tourism is a service-oriented industry that sells intangible experiences to consumers/tourists to grow its global economic footprint. One of the critical components to the success of any tourism business is the effective use of communication to offer customers tangible cues about those intangible experiences. Tourism products and services involve the interaction between tourists/consumers and employees; hence the quality of tourism employees must be considered as it directly impacts the tourist experience (George 2011:13). Luka (2015:76) highlighted that the occupational skills required by employees to assist them in providing exceptional service are communication (the ability to articulate fluently, non-verbal and listening skills), team-working, self-awareness, creativeness, innovation and the capacity to communicate with different ethnic groups (Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2018:6).

As tourism is a global phenomenon, employees within the tourism sector must be able to communicate with tourists in different languages from different cultural backgrounds. The ability to communicate in different languages may impact the tourist experience and tourism growth within those destinations, as this will assist in conflict resolution and building long-lasting relationships with clients (Potočnik-Topler 2017:82). Communication plays a pivotal role in how messages are sent and received between individuals; messages are not received merely through words but through non-verbal communication. These include facial expression,

head, eye and hand movements, posture and appearance, as this may enhance the level of service (Lamichhane 2016:93-94). Okoli (2017:151) further proposed that an audience utilises 1/3 verbal communication and 2/3 nonverbal communication to decode messages. Therefore, when verbal and non-verbal messages are conflicting, most individuals rely on non-verbal gestures to derive a conclusion. The posture, appearance and gestures sent by the speaker are equally as crucial as their spoken words. According to Kuo (2016:44), five essential training areas focus on meeting industry requirements for graduates participating in workplace training programmes that build a crucial foundation for lifelong learning. These consists of reading, intellectual capacity, business writing, enunciation, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary. An essential writing element is applying business acumen when scribing persuasive proposals, corresponding with customers, drafting commercial letters, and general record keeping and reports.

Kuo (2016:44) further stated that although technology and multimedia are fashioning new ways of writing, the discipline of business writing needs to be instilled into students as this type of writing differs from the conventional form of writing. Benjamin and Kline (2019:131) regard self-awareness as an influencing factor that drives an individual's actions to overcome challenges that affect one's life. Self-belief is key to achieving personal goals, improving effort and creating a sense of personal confidence. Developing self-awareness in graduates is intended to build resilience when facing difficult situations. Therefore, the task of training the future workforce and equipping them with industry-specific skills to excel in the tourism industry but finding a solution to how it is incorporated into the curricula still proves to be a challenge (Potočnik-Topler 2017:83).

g) End-user Computing (Theory)

In table 4.3, the graduates agreed with the relevance of end-user computing (theory) as a subject in their curriculum. An overall mean score of (mean=5.00) was identified, indicating that the graduates found that end-user computing (theory) was effectively integrated into the curricula. Computer basics (mean=4.53) received the highest score as graduates established that this component benefited them during their WIL training. Most tourism providers incorporate tourism programming and technological systems in their day-to-day operations. This was followed closely by components of a computer system (mean=4.35), concepts of data and data files (mean=4.33) and managing data (mean=4.30), which aided them in understanding how to utilise technology systems to provide exceptional customer service to the clients. When asked to rate input/output devices (mean=4.29), computer performance issues (mean=4.28) and

storage devices (mean=4.23), graduates classified these components as extremely relevant during WIL, as it afforded them an opportunity to explore different technological programmes and identify solutions to issues during their developmental phase of learning in the tourism industry. Internet and information superhighway (mean=4.19), operating systems applications and software development (mean=4.10) also played a fundamental role in the curriculum, as identified by the score allocated to these components. Thereafter, in this category, graduates were required to conclude whether case studies (mean=3.92), licences, security and networks (mean=3.91) were suitable components in their curriculum. The graduates indicated that these concepts were of value as they were, to some extent, prepared prior to placement, contributing positively to their learning quality.

h) End-user Computing (Practical)

Table 4.3 illustrates the relevance of end-user computing (practical) as a subject in their curriculum. An overall mean score of (mean =5.00) was identified, indicating that the graduates considered end-user computing (practical) highly relevant to their curriculum. Thereby enabling them to integrate effectively within the corporate environment during WIL. Respondents were then required to rate the content/unit which constitutes end-user computing (practical) as a subject. The data depicted in table 4.3 shows that record, file and database management programs (mean=4.52) ranked as the most dominant component, followed closely by word-processing (mean=4.49), operating system commands and file management (mean=4.43), spreadsheets and graphics (mean=4.43). This indicated that graduates regarded these components as pertinent and equipped them with the necessary knowledge to identify opportunities and examine challenges to thrive and become responsible members of the workplace team.

Throughout the tourism and hospitality sector, modern businesses have realised the importance of technology and its role as a strategic tool in providing a competitive edge for such businesses. Tourism is an information-intensive industry whereby clients utilise visual aids to create a perception of what their experience might be like (Car, Stifanich and Šimunić 2019:167). According to Xiang (2018:148) the use of technology has transitioned from a commercial marketing tool to a knowledge-generating component. The use of technology within the tourism sector is crucial in creating a holistic experience for clients by bringing together different service providers to produce an all-inclusive package. It is vital for graduates to have a proactive understanding of computer-generated programmes, how to operate these

systems and the ability to extract reliable data to increase tourism business revenue (Adeyinka-Ojo *et al.* 2020:115). The internet has unlocked opportunities for organisations to compete within the global tourism market. It has allowed small to medium size businesses to access resources and services online to accumulate, process, and evaluate data to be competitive within the global market (Van Aken, Pavlo, Gordon and Zhang 2017:1009). The internet has streamlined daily operational activities, becoming an effective business tool for sending and receiving communication and online marketing and allowing business transactions outside of regular trading hours through online banking. This approach is a simple, convenient and reliable way of transacting, as tourism businesses often correspond with an international clientele. For this reason, tourism businesses have migrated most of their business activities to online platforms to avoid unforeseen limitations (Miltchev and Neykova 2015:224). Therefore, it is of great importance that new employees entering the tourism sector must have a clear understanding of the role of technology and how to access the benefits of the world wide web, as information technology presents clients with the ability to peruse services that are of superior value (Babalola and Oluwatoyin 2014:39).

According to Suen (2012:8288) the role of end-user computing is to test the competency of individuals regarding their application of IT knowledge and information systems and how they employ their understanding utilising technological interfaces. Suen further highlighted that the lack of awareness regarding technological advancement was a significant obstacle that restricted their capacity to embrace information systems fully. Technology has changed the landscape of many tourism businesses. New employees are required to have a minimum knowledge of basic computing skills in order to operate successfully in their roles (Gibbs, Steel and Mckinnon 2015:2). End-user computing is made up of four distinct components that graduates need to possess: "computing mindset, computing knowledge, computing application and computing potential". The *computing mindset* captures the essence of theories, themes and values relating to how it affects the end-user's competence to apply their depth of understanding to computing. *Computing knowledge* refers to the overall understanding of computer-based technology, how to develop solutions, the effective use of operational systems and the application of appropriate licences, security and networks. *Computing application* is the ability to process basic computing knowledge to cultivate business solutions, achieve business goals, control essential business data and administer operational security measures. *Computing potential* identifies individuals who have the potential to advance by completing degrees and certificates and engaging in training based on the production of IT and computing

knowledge to improve their computing competency (Suen 2012:8288). One of the critical computing competencies employers require is employees' ability to produce budgeting and forecasting models through the effective use of spreadsheet software. It was further highlighted that word-processing and email skills were highly sought after by employers seeking to gain a competitive edge over their rival business (Gibbs *et al.* 2014:2). Gibbs *et al.* (2014:2) further indicated that the use of spreadsheet software should be integrated into the graduate's curricula, as this skill is being used throughout different business sectors and graduates can build on this skill whilst WIL.

i) Events Management

As can be seen from Table 4.3, the graduates answered mostly in favour of the relevance of events management as a subject in their curriculum. An overall mean score of (mean=5.00) was identified, which indicated that the graduates considered events management to be extremely relevant in their curricular. Events management played a productive role during their training and therefore they were able to display a level of eagerness which positively impacted their progress. It was then necessary for respondents to rate the content/unit that encompasses events management as a subject. Based on table 4.3, risk management emerged as the most prevalent component (mean=3.77), followed closely by event planning process/procedure (mean=3.74), event marketing and communication (mean=3.72), introduction to events (mean=3.67), human resource (mean=3.60) and catering management for events (mean=3.60). It is clear that graduates viewed these components as important as they had a positive impact on their ability to progress in their learning objectives and develop industry-specific knowledge/skills which enhanced their learning experience. In addition, graduates were required to determine whether event sponsorship (mean=3.56) was integral to the curricula. The graduates perceived this component as relevant, and through a well-structured events management curriculum that aimed to prepare them with the essential competencies led to graduates who were better prepared to succeed during WIL.

The exponential growth of tourism and the sub-sectors that are associated with this industry are driving higher education institutions to cultivate lifelong learners who are adequately equipped to persist and prosper in a global knowledge economy. Graduates who display the ability to apply their skills and knowledge innovatively and successfully to demanding situations may satisfy the growing demand of the tourism industry (Lee, Lee and Kim 2009:61; Randall 2017). One such sector has been identified as the meetings and events industry. This type of industry offers careers as event coordinators, wedding planners, sporting event

consultants and/or conferencing managers (Nelson and Silvers 2009:34). Thus, the event management component within the tourism curricula must be well-balanced in order for graduates to derive benefits from the programme as they seek to advance in the events industry (Lee *et al.* 2009:61). Tourism business practices are rapidly changing through technological advancement and financial challenges that the tourism industry encounter while trading in global markets (Robertson, Juneke, and Lockstone-Binney 2012:227-228).

Employers within the event management sectors seek out individuals who are highly efficient, strategic thinkers, computer literate, commercially aware, entrepreneurial and have the ability to multi-task (Lee *et al.* 2009:61). Event management education should encompass knowledge which is applied through practical application that will give students the confidence and ability to assimilate effectively within this sector. This can be achieved through the planning, control and execution of all types of events based on time, location, financial planning and the overall success in achieving the set objectives. Event marketing is an innovative tool that is used by local and international businesses to promote events by expressing the events purpose and intentions, creating brand awareness and building viable relationships (Ismailova, Abisheva and Ismailova 2019:94). Building on event marketing Gordon and Cheah (2017:2) asserts that events sponsorship is crucial to the success of any hosted event, it offer businesses the opportunity to engage with the community, it has the ability to eliminate cultural barriers and can assist with the discovery of new niche markets.

Sponsorship can be a mutual beneficial relationship as the sponsor can create their own strategic positioning and community awareness through key events and the event can garner interest through the sponsor they associate with. However, any events, has a level of risk associated with it. Risk management is a key component that should be considered prior to hosting any event. It is a pro-active process that evaluates all probable and future risks that the hosted event may encounter and strategically predicting, precluding, curtailing, minimizing, and forecasting reactions to alleviate those detected risks (Hanstad 2012:189). By having a well-rounded view of how to manage events students should also be able to customise special events based on the client's needs, expectations, the identification of future risks and be able to attract sponsors for events (Robertson *et al.* 2012:227-228; Bouchon, Hussain and Konar 2017:2-3). Therefore, the effectiveness of the current event management curricula which is based on policies, procedures and best practices of an ever-changing and complex world, maybe enhanced through the involvement of industry, educational practitioners and the students (Lee *et al.* 2009:62-63; Randall 2017).

Table 4.4: Relevance of the Tourism Management program for WIL

	1 Not at all relevant	2 Slightly relevant	3 Neutral	4 Relevant	5 Extremely relevant	Mean
The use of managerial and entrepreneurial values in developing tourism businesses	8.4	8.5	11.3	33.0	38.7	3.68
The use sustainable planning and development of tourism destinations and services	6.6	8.5	16.0	25.5	43.4	3.93
Maintaining suitable communication and social relationships with speakers of a foreign language	8.4	7.5	14.2	30.2	39.6	3.88
The ability to accomplish technical and operational tasks in the tourism industry	3.7	7.5	15.1	31.1	42.5	4.04
Effectively maintaining operational practices in a travel industry	5.6	6.6	12.3	32.1	43.4	4.04

Respondents were asked to rate the relevance of the Tourism Management programme in WIL, on a scale of 1 to 5, where ‘1’ is ‘not at all relevant’ and ‘5’ is ‘extremely relevant’. This data is presented in Table 4.4. Majority of the graduates who participated in this study, indicated that the ability to accomplish technical and operational tasks in the tourism industry (mean=4.04), accompanied by effectively maintaining operational practices in the travel industry (mean=4.04) proved to be relevant and beneficial in the overall tourism programme. The graduates were then asked to rate the relevance of the use of sustainable planning and development of tourism destinations and services (mean=3.93) which further illustrates its importance to the tourism management programme. Regarding maintaining suitable communication and social relationships with speakers of a foreign language (mean=3.88), the graduates responses highlighted the need for foreign language modules to be embedded within the curricula. Finally, the use of managerial and entrepreneurial values in developing tourism businesses (mean=3.68) was addressed and graduates classified this component as relevant within the tourism programme.

In the past small to medium sized tourism enterprises had a casual managerial approach to the way in which businesses were managed. Many of these businesses were not focused on long-term planning, had inadequate control systems in place and relied on rudimentary marketing tools to grow their business ventures (Fadda 2020:65-66). Entrepreneurial skills have somewhat impacted the way in which these tourism businesses operate, as many owners now play an active role in the growth of their businesses. By cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset

in a younger generation, provides the tourism sector with an invaluable opportunity to discover, adjust and to transform new prospects, into economic and social value. By developing advanced production techniques and establishing new organisational structures will enhance strategic thinking, increase productivity and sustainability of tourism (Fadda 2020:69; Ndou, Mele and Del Vecchio 2019:2).

Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, Jasinskas and Simanavicius (2021:260) highlighted that modern day businesses have incorporated measures of sustainability into their daily practices, which still remains a challenge as the industry continuously evolves. Most businesses encounter challenges in the application of technology and the consumption rate of tourism which carries with it financial, ecological and societal impacts (*ibid*). Therefore, strategic planning and the execution of business operations must be incorporated into the curricula in order to combat sustainable tourism issues that may arise during a business's struggle to gain a competitive edge. The role of higher education institutions is therefore vital in the development of entrepreneurial and managerial skills for future tourism business operations (Ndou *et al.* 2019:2; Fadda 2020:69).

The ability to understand technological procedures requires a higher-level cognitive capability, it involves the analytical assessment, diagnostic evaluation and the application of practical solution to problems encountered. Digital competence is required in the 21st-century in the field of tourism as it facilitates the management of organizations and destinations, assists in human resource functions and is required to meet the growing demands of this industry through digital competition (Ndou *et al.* 2019:2 ; Fadda 2020:69). Arango-Morales, Delgado-Cruz and Tamayo-Salcedo (2019:310-311) established that the tourism students lack the digital competence to greatly impact the competitiveness of the host organisation during WIL. Therefore, to increase the student's digital competency, the design and development of structured training programmes must be assessed, and corrective measures be executed timeously (*ibid*). The overall preparedness of students prior to the commencement of WIL should be considered by curriculum developers and educational practitioners from higher education institutions as this impacts their ability to exhibit the knowledge and skills whilst actively engaged within a host organisation. The WIL component is generally completed within a six-month time frame and is integrated into the tourism curricula towards the latter part of the students' academic qualification which is deemed suitable by the education institution. The concept of WIL allows graduates the ability to assimilate what they have learnt in the classroom and apply it in a practical setting within their host organisation (Ferns and Moore 2012:208).

4.5. Gaps in the tourism management curriculum in relations to WIL

This section discusses the data analysis on the gaps in the tourism management curriculum in relations to WIL. This section will examine the extent to which the university prepared the graduates for WIL and did the role they participated in during WIL, help to develop their employability skills. The following tables presents the graduates responses which was rated utilising a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 being ‘Always’ and 1 being ‘Never’. The graduates were then requested to indicate their employability status after graduation, and the level of difficulty in obtaining employment in the industry. Thereafter, they were instructed to evaluate if the ND: tourism management curriculum was up-to-date and relevant to the needs of the tourism industry.

Table 4.5: The extent to which the university curriculum prepared the graduates for WIL

	1 Never	2 Sometimes	3 Unsure	4 Often	5 Always	Mean
I had a preparation program that helped me prepare for WIL.	5.7	17.9	10.4	30.2	35.8	3.73
I had a preparation program or resources that helped me prepare to maximise my learning whilst on WIL.	10.4	9.4	20.8	26.4	33.0	3.62
I had time with my academic supervisor after WIL to reflect on my learning experiences.	14.2	14.2	8.5	25.5	37.7	3.58
I had time with my academic supervisor after WIL to discuss my experiences.	17.9	9.4	8.5	30.2	34.0	3.53

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the university curriculum prepared graduates for WIL, on scale from 1 to 5, where ‘1’ is ‘never’ and ‘5’ is ‘always. Majority of the graduates who participated in this study (Table 4.5), found that they were given adequate training through programs/resources which assisted them to prepare for WIL (mean=3.73). Graduates thereafter were requested to assess the program/resources that the university utilised to prepare them to maximise their learning whilst on WIL (mean=3.62), their responses implied that the programs and materials utilised in their training was successfully implemented. To further establish weather graduates were allowed to reflect on their WIL experiences, they were asked to indicate if they had sufficient time with their academic supervisor after WIL (mean=3.58), which depicts that time was afforded to graduates for reflection. Subsequently, table 4.5 noted that graduates were granted time to discuss their workplace practices with their WIL supervisor after WIL (mean=3.53) thereby enabling them to capitalize on their learning experience.

Work Integrated Learning has been viewed as an ideal tool to bridge the gap between the student's theoretical and practical pedagogies. Through a well-structured WIL programme, students are intended to get adequate on the job training which positively contributes towards the attainment of knowledge and skills that is necessary to function within the tourism industry (Dwesini 2015:1; Nguyen, Goh and Murillo 2021:2). A key factor that impacts a student's ability to learn and to function in a workplace setting is that lack of preparation for WIL. Students are therefore not able to maximise their learning experience as they have unrealistic perceptions and there seems to be an absence of the relevant skills that are required by the industry (Batholmeus and Pop 2019:27). In South Africa and Namibia, a two-day workshop is offered to students as part of the preparation process before students commence with WIL and is known as the Employability Improvement Programme (EIP) (*ibid*).

According to Dwesini (2015:1) a concerted effort must be made to evaluate the preparedness programme for students who will embark in WIL as these programmes often influence the quality of their WIL experience. Factors which may hinder a student's engagement and effectiveness during WIL are, the lack of job satisfaction, students' expectations are misaligned with industry requirements and therefore negative emotions and well-being are prompted by anxiety and stress. One of the effective tools that some education institutions have implemented to prepare students is the use of simulations (Nguyen *et al.* 2021:2). According to Ipinge, Batholmeus and Pop (2020:538) simulations represents real-world events, processes, and challenges that maybe utilised to prepare students for workplace training, as it allows for the retrieval of appropriate data, advances the level of communication, improves presentation proficiencies, scheduling, problem solving, and increase workplace morale through a well simulated environment (Wood, Zegwaard and Fox-turn bull 2020:333).

Supervisors are a key component in the overall performance of WIL. They are regarded as intermediaries that facilitates mentoring, counselling, performance management and assist students in addressing challenges that may arise during WIL. Supervisors have a complex role to play as they seek to encourage a progressive work attitude and motivate students' career aspirations. The supportive nature of a supervisor and the time they afford their students to reflect and discuss their experiences after WIL is crucial to the transfer of skills and knowledge for students (Martin, Rees, Fleming, Zegwaard and Vaughan 2019:230). According to Mavundla (2021:73) WIL supervisors stated that it was impractical to communicate with all the students but rather aim to correspond with a minimum of 70% of the students that were placed. Although reflection and discussion of the WIL programme is required, it proves to be

challenging for supervisors as they need to maintain their teaching schedule and the distance between where students are placed becomes time consuming (*ibid*). WIL supervisors provide opportunities for students to immerse themselves and adapt to the realities of the working environment, while maintaining a professional standard. Supervisor may be more supportive or theoretically driven and less focused on the assessment of a student performance during WIL, as they are academics who were allocated the responsibility of a WIL supervisor (Fleming, Rowe, and Jackson 2021:709).

Table 4.6: Activities undertaken during WIL placement

Activity	1 Never	2 Sometimes	3 Unsure	4 Often	5 Always	Mean
Undertake work relevant to the learning outcomes	2.8	14.2	7.5	48.1	27.4	3.83
Undertake work relevant to the goals of the organisation you were placed in	3.8	10.4	14.2	32.1	39.6	3.93
Contributed valuable idea to the organisation (such as a product, or change in practice or policy)	13.2	10.4	17.0	22.6	36.8	3.59
Applied theories you had learned in class	3.8	17.9	8.5	25.5	44.3	3.89
Applied or developed skills you had learned in class	3.8	14.2	9.4	28.3	44.3	3.95
Critically evaluated theories you had learned in class	7.5	15.1	12.3	22.6	42.5	3.77

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which graduates undertook certain activities during WIL. This was question was in the form of a rating scale from 1 to 5, where ‘1’ is ‘never’ and ‘5’ is ‘always. The data depicted in Table 4.6 are the responses given by graduates regarding how often they were able to apply or develop skills they had learned in class (mean=3.95), followed by undertaking work relevant to the goals of the organisation (mean=3.93). The graduates were required to determine if they were able to apply their theoretical knowledge that they acquired to real-world situations (mean=3.89) and additionally, whether they actively participated in work relevant to the learning outcomes (mean=3.83). Graduates mentioned that these were regarded as key factors that contributed to the overall success of their workplace training. Also, graduates indicated that they were able to critically evaluate theories they had learned in the classroom (mean=3.83) which denoted that they were able to effectively evaluate and apply theories in the workplace. Graduates were able to sometimes contribute valuable idea to the organisation (mean=3.59).

The role of work-integrated learning is to allow students the opportunity to have authentic workplace experiences by integrating theory with practice. It is designed to develop a student's self-efficacy understand concepts, theories and to enhance their capabilities (Henderson and Trede 2017:73-74). The reflective component of WIL should encourage students to reflect on their personal goals, learning outcomes and the types of assessment required during their workplace training, that will enable them to develop both personally and professionally (Ajjawi, Tai, Huu Nghia, Boud, Johnson and Patrick 2020:306). WIL is considered to be crucial in ensuring that graduates are profession-ready, by encouraging them to become critical thinkers, manage workplace challenges and have the capacity to shape organisational cultures. It is therefore imperative that educational institutions change their assessment and evaluation strategies of WIL to enhance student engagement (Kiriri 2019:258).

Henderson and Trede (2017:73) suggests that there are no guarantees that participating in WIL may assist students in achieving the range and depth of the intended learning outcomes, if there is no way in which to measure how students develop an alignment between their theoretical learning and the application of skills. Ajjawi *et al.* (2020:305) argue that the assessment activities during WIL must mirror the learning objectives set out in their curriculum in order to create an authentic interpretation of the quality of learning received. Moreover, Luk and Chan (2021:2) advocate that unplanned learning outcomes are more meaningful in the learning process for students, as it encourages creativity and self-efficiency rather than doing the bare minimum. An assessment of a graduate's engagement with the WIL programme is essential in building character and adding value in an effort to increase their employment prospects. Through the evaluation of the diverse tasks completed and authentic experience may help them develop behavioural competencies, refine their professional skills and reflect on the effectiveness of theories learnt in the classroom and how it may be applied to achieve progress and bring about change (Martin and Rees 2019:197; Bancoro 2020:577).

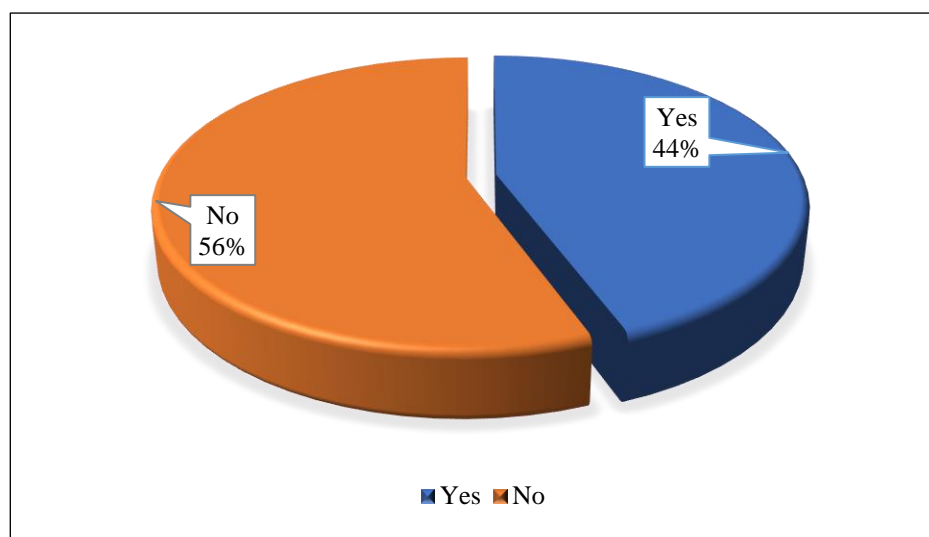


Figure 4.9: New skills learned during WIL

The data depicted in Figure 4.9 reveals that 44.3% of the graduates acknowledged that they acquired new skills due to their involvement in the tourism industry through WIL. The remaining 55.7% of the graduates indicated that they did not develop any new skills whilst completing their WIL training. This is indicative that graduates received many skills through the Tourism Management curriculum. New skills acquired are related to industry sector that graduates were placed in to undertake WIL, as well the type of WIL activities they participated in. It is possible that skills from such sectors are not included in the curriculum. The participants were asked to list the new skills that they acquired if their answered yes to this question and their answers are illustrated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: New skills acquired by graduates during WIL

New skills learned during WIL	Percentage
Administrative skills (keeping of records)	2.7
Working independently, problem-solving, conducting meetings, self-confidence	0.9
Communication skills, computer skills (Microsoft outlook), time management, team building, professionalism and problem-solving	11.7
Conflicts management, working under pressure, time management, communication, and teamwork	3.6
Cooking and waitressing	0.9
The use of the APEX system, communication, tour guiding, customer service skills	1.8
Creativity, conflict resolutions, cultural awareness, leadership skills	0.9
Good verbal communication, problem-solving, customer service	0.9
Tour operator skills	0.9
Human resources (Filing)	0.9
Life-long learning	0.9
Multitasking	0.9
Operational skills	0.9

Organizational ability, IT, business writing skills	0.9
Project management	0.9
The use of reservation systems (Sabre, Galileo, Limo Anywhere and Travel studio system)	8.1
Skipper/ captain	0.9
Switchboard operation, administration, reception management	0.9
Telephone Etiquette, events coordinating and quotations	1.8
Reservation systems, data capturing and stock management	0.9

Table 4.7 illustrates the new skills that graduates developed during their Work Integrated Learning. There was a myriad of skills that students had indicated which were enhanced through hands-on interaction with experienced members of staff in the host organisation. A higher percentage of graduates (11.7%) suggested that communication, computer (Microsoft outlook), time management, professionalism and problem-solving skills were deemed to be significant factors for the day-to-day operations of the tourism businesses. This was followed by 8.1% of respondents who highlighted that the use of reservation systems was a key skill that they learned during their workplace training. Conflict management and working under pressure were rated by (3.6%) of the graduates as highly important skills that contributed to the overall success of the WIL programme.

A further 1.8% of respondents suggested that the use of APEX systems, tour guiding, customer service skills and event co-ordinating were vital elements that they employed to perform duties and tasks. A noteworthy skill that 2.7% of the graduates were drawn to, was the use of administrative expertise to provide customers with a valuable experience. In addition, there were a number of other skills that graduates mentioned that supported them in the working environment, which were data capturing, creativity, stock and project management, teamwork, leadership and self-confidence, life-long learning, multitasking, tour operator, organizational ability and operational skills which were identified by 13.5% (0.9% x 15) of the participants as new skills that they acquired during their WIL participation.

Tourism has been widely recognised as one of the world's fastest growing economic sector and is a strategic component of a country's long-term success. An area of development that directs a country's economic growth, is its ability to produce a well-educated and skilled workforce. In South Africa the higher education system is greatly affected by global changes in the labour market, and they have tried to strengthen the calibre of graduates that are entering the workforce. Although efforts have been made to combat the challenges experienced by graduates there still remains issues that need to be addressed as tourism is a highly dynamic

and competitive industry. One way of addressing this issue is evident in the number of tourism educational courses that have grown considerably in recent years (Daniel, Costa, Pita and Costa 2017:65; Okeke-Uzodike and Anwana 2020:6400). According to Hartanto, Arifin and Fordiana (2021:28) to equip individuals to attain proficiency skills, excel in the current economic climate and pursue careers within their chosen field of specialisation they are required to display both hard and soft skills. The hard skills are generally linked to their academic knowledge, which provides graduates with technical skills and sets out guidelines which should be adhered to in the workplace. The new technological developments that have impacted all business functions within the tourism industry demands that its users need to be technologically competent. New employees entering the tourism industry need to be knowledgeable regarding the technological applications and how to operate these systems when linking hospitality, airline and Destination Management Organization sectors (Sigala 2018:152). Graduates soft skills are honed during their interaction with the workplace activities and are generally linked to communication, teamwork, time management and problem-solving aspects of the tourism industry (Daniel *et al.* 2017:65). The blend of hard and soft skills is instrumental in the development of an individual's intellectual abilities and creates graduates who have the capacity to think critically and are flexible to the demands of the industry (Hartanto *et al.* 2021:28). Alsoud, Abdeljaber, Ab-Yajid, Johar, Al-masaeed, Shukri (2021:304) highlighted that industries world-wide are experiencing a fourth Industrial Revolution 4.0 (I.R.4.0) which is primarily driven by the usage of big data in a digital world.

Graduates are required to evolve as this revolution necessitates and they are expected to possess the capabilities in order to thrive in this highly dynamic and competitive industry. Alsoud *et al.* (2021:304) further suggested that in this modern digital age businesses have the opportunity for exponential growth but may be hindered due to the lack of competently trained graduates. A significant expansion of knowledge and employability skills of graduates is required in order to keep up with the rapid transformation within the industry (Lim, Foo, Yeo, Chan and Loh 2020:106; Sambell, Devine, Lo and Lawlis 2020:77). There are many benefits that can be derived from an established WIL program such as professionalism; communication skills, problem solving, critical thinking, teamwork, creativity and boosting an individual's self-confidence. However, a substantial gap still remains between what tourism educator deem sufficient and the requirements of the tourism industry (Daniel *et al.* 2017:65; Sigala 2018:152; Okoye and Edokpolor 2021:3).

Table 4. 8: Aspects of the WIL experience that prepared graduates for a career in the tourism industry

Aspects of the WIL experience	Percentage
Administration (Invoicing, data capturing, quotations)	1.9
Airline industry and marketing	0.9
Planning itineraries, bookings, problem solving	0.9
The use of reservation /booking systems for the guest and team building skills	3.8
Communication skills and working with different cultural groups/ people	21.0
Self-confidence and teamwork	7.5
Critical thinking and rational decision making	0.9
Customer service, communication, and computer skills	18.0
Events management/planning, time management	4.7
Interacting with tourist, identifying behavioral patterns, dealing with customers complaints, working under pressure	5.7
Good work ethic and punctuality	0.9
Shift work, time management, team building and communication	1.9
Providing customer service to international tourists, time management, work under pressure and the ability to be patient	1.9
Entrepreneurial skills	0.9
Operations management and quality assurance	4.7
Event management, customer service, self-awareness, and self confidence	0.9
Problem solving, multi-tasking and time management	1.9
Total quality management, data capturing	0.9
Telephone techniques, booking processes, assertiveness, and tour guiding	0.9
Self-confidence, working under pressure, events management, listening, paying attention to detail and team building	1.9
Time management and customer expectations	5.7
Tourism development, event management and planning	2.8
The use of reservation /booking systems, financial management, balance sheet and stock taking	0.9
Understanding the tourism industry and the different sectors	2.8
Working in front office, guest liaison	1.9
Nothing	3.8

The data depicted in Table 4.8 presents the responses that were given by graduates relating to the aspects of the WIL experience that helped prepare them for a career in the tourism industry. Majority of the graduates who participated in this study (21%) indicated that communication skills and working with different cultural groups/people were the key skills that facilitated their growth and development during WIL. Moreover, 18% of respondents confirmed that customer service and computer skills were beneficial skills that they learnt during their engagement with industry. Respondents also noted that implied that interacting with tourist, identifying

behavioural patterns, dealing with customer complaints, working under pressure and time management helped them become proactive learners during their learning process in WIL. Overall, 7.5% of the graduates rated self-confidence and teamwork as skills that were enhanced through their experience. The data also revealed that 4.7% of the graduates highlighted that events management/planning, operations management and quality assurance were relevant learning experiences that positively impacted their performance and growth during WIL. A further 3.8% of graduates stated that the use of reservation systems and working together in a team were vital aspects that allowed them to develop their capabilities for careers in the tourism industry. A further 2.8% viewed tourism development, understanding the tourism industry and the different sectors as important competencies that prepared them for the demands of the working environment. From the above data it can be concluded that WIL assisted the graduates in building employability skills that were required to operate effectively in the tourism industry. A small proportion of graduates (1.9%) stated that administration, shift work, team building, providing customer service to international tourists and the ability to be patient enhanced their level of learning and therefore they were able to develop industry-specific skills.

The educational benefits derived from a students' participation in a structured WIL programme is meant to develop their ability to apply concepts and themes into a practical setting. WIL tends to cultivate a graduate's analytical abilities in solving problems, generates a high level of self-confidence and assists them in making rational decisions concerning their future career path (Ibrahim and Jaafar 2017:933). By providing hands-on work experience to graduates it is believed that it will increase their applied knowledge, develop their professionalism, improve their communication and administrative abilities, and assist them in building a network of reliable service providers within a given industry (Negara and Hidayati 2020:501). Kassem, Al-Zaidi and Baessa (2021:6) further highlights that the WIL experience is an effective transitional tool that facilitate students' movement between academic learning and the realities of the working environment. WIL develops a graduate's capabilities by enhancing their technical skills, promoting reflective thinking and reinforces their commitment to achieving educational goals.

According to Matook, Wang, Koeppel and Guerin (2021:4) the key benefit of WIL hinges on a student's ability to appreciate the significance it has on their self-improvement. When a student creates a perception of self-worth, they are greatly invested in the tasks and duties assigned to them during their work placement. Kolb and Kolb (2017:13) indicated that students often acquire knowledge and skills through their interaction with industry and therefore the

element of self-reflection is crucial to the success of experiential learning as it compels an individual to evaluate their learning outcomes. Kolb's conceptual framework indicates that a student's perception is linked to their concrete experience, while the action of performing tasks is linked to abstract conceptualisation. This is related to the two distinctive learning styles of Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which are converging or assimilating (*ibid*). Matook *et al.* (2021:2) further highlighted that educational institutions must develop creative methods that will enhance a graduate's ability to learn and display employability traits that is sought after by industry. The authenticity and relevance of an educational institutions WIL programme can significantly increase the learning outcomes of students. WIL aids in the development of communication skills, building professional relationships, enhance planning, organisational and problem-solving skills and improves their time management abilities (Doolan, Piggott, Chapman, and Rycroft 2019:102).

Sher and Sherratt (2010:377) revealed that some students found all aspects of their WIL placement to be helpful, whilst others stressed that aspects were of greater importance such as management related skills, project management and understanding organisational structures. The consensus regarding experiential learning is that it has the capacity to improve graduates' employability skills and to develop their self-confidence (Kolb and Kolb 2017:13; Doolan *et al.* 2019:102; Negara and Hidayati 2020:501; Matook *et al.* 2021:2; Kassem *et al.* 2021:6). Using innovative developmental programmes graduates are able apply new concepts and dynamic processes to drive transformation and increase competitiveness within the industry. It is therefore important that experiential learning programmes are tested for its reliability and consistency as it adds value to the graduate by developing competencies and is essential to their economic and social well-being (Bridgstock and Jackson 2019:468).

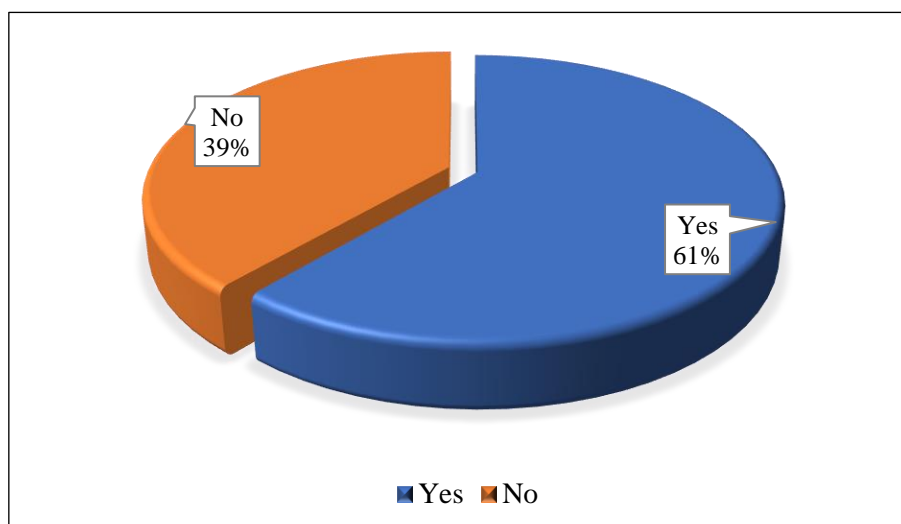


Figure 4.10: WIL helped develop employability

The data revealed that 61.3% of the graduates agreed that the role they participated in during their practical training developed their employability within their field of specialisation in the tourism industry which is depicted in Figure 4.10. The remaining (38.7%) of the graduates indicated that the role they participated in did not positively impact their employability within the tourism industry. Thereafter the graduates were asked to briefly explain how their employability were developed during their engagement with the industry, and if they answered yes to this question their responses are illustrated in Table 4.9

Table 4.9: Extent to which participation in WIL helped develop the employability of graduates

WIL developed graduates' employability within the tourism industry	Percentage
I gained knowledge, skills, and experience in the different sectors of the tourism industry	20
Communication and time management were key skills that I developed in the tourism industry	9.4
I can now deal with customers and provide customer service in a practical manner	8.5
I was able to learn the operations of the different departments, e.g., front office, receptionist, chef, waitressing, housekeeping	4.7
I have learnt to be self-confident in my duties and tasks in the workplace	3.8
I have skills and knowledge of the airline industry	2.8
At Europcar and the Hilton hotel I was able to learn booking/reservation systems	1.9
I have experience in the sales, events, and marketing department. I have excellent communication skills and entrepreneurial skills	1.9
I have knowledge of how tourism activities are conducted in a public office/ Municipality. I have knowledge of the legislative framework governing the development of tourism	1.9

I learnt to be punctual, confident, communicating effectively, multitasking and organizational skills	1.9
I was able to adopt entrepreneurial skills	0.9
The experience I gained helped me become an educator	0.9
I was a tour guide, and this helped me improve my ability to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds	0.9
It has helped me gain experience in the largest tour operator in Southern Africa	0.9
Environmental and conservations experience	0.9

Graduates were asked to elaborate on the employability skills developed during their WIL training. Table 4.9 depicts the employability skills which were deemed important, and most of the graduates, 20% indicated that through their practical training, they gained relevant knowledge, skills, and experience in the different sectors of the tourism industry, which expedited their learning and secured them employment within the industry. A further 9.4% suggested that communication and time management were essential employability skills they developed during WIL, while 8.5% stated that they can now practically deal with customers and provide them with an efficient service, thus allowing them to transition successfully into the tourism industry. A few graduates (1.9%) agreed that booking/reservation systems, sales, events management, marketing, and entrepreneurial skills provided them with an enriched learning experience, and hence they were able to develop a skill set that was relevant to the needs of the industry. The data also revealed that 4.7% of the graduates highlighted that they were able to gain valuable experience in reception and front office, chef, waitressing, and housekeeping. This enhanced their work-related competencies and simultaneously allowed them to adapt to the demands of their employers and organizations. Additionally, 3.8% of the graduates stated that they were self-confident in the duties allocated to them in the workplace. A further 2.8% of the graduates asserted that they gained knowledge and skills through their interaction with the airline industry, which allowed them to develop their capabilities for professions in the tourism industry. Through the evolution of technology, the hospitality and tourism industry are experiencing an influx of refined clientele that expect products and services offerings to be of high standards. Tourism businesses are influenced largely by the quality of human capital which they employ that give them a competitive advantage in this complex and dynamic sector (Bharwani and Talib 2017:399).

The process to discover one's professional identity is determined by the amount of time and effort that an individual contributes towards their future career. When a graduate invests in their personal growth, they develop skills such as self-confidence, communication skills, improved customer service which adds to their learning experience (Swingler, Roy, Manoli,

Hasty, Macfarlane, Kapoor, Gardani and Kokkinidis 2022:4). As they progress through their journey of self-discovery, the type of industry engagement they have chosen is crucial in connecting graduates with their potential employers. Therefore, the concept of WIL is believed to develop work-related skills and capabilities required by prospective employers and to create career opportunities (Carbone, Rayner, Ye and Durandet 2020:972). In both developing and developed countries, literature has revealed that a gap still persists between employer expectations and graduate's perceptions (Tan, Laswad and Chua 2021:226; Swingler *et al.* 2022:4). There is a great demand for graduates to possess both technical and non-technical skills such as organisational and planning skills, teamwork, critical thinking and the capacity to address problems (Pang *et al.* 2019:57; Tan *et al.* 2021:226).

The tourism industry has experienced a rapid transformation in the use of technological systems which has led higher education institutions to rethink how they develop their curriculum in order to embed employability skills (Swingler *et al.* 2022:4). The use of technology in the management of time, gives rise to the ability to develop effective strategies, prioritise operational duties and increases self-efficiency (Redelinghuys and Drevin 2019). While, most student training and development programmes is centered around operational duties, the industry requires service-oriented skills to be instilled in students as the tourism and hospitality industry caters to a diverse range of clients from different cultural backgrounds (Bilsland, Nagy and Smith 2020:425; Mcmanus and Rook 2021:272). One of the most sought-after skills that graduates are required to display is the ability to communicate both verbally and written communication. This skill allows for formal or informal communication with internal and external audiences on a local, national or international platform. Although communication has been highlighted as one of the fundamental skills required to operate efficiently in the tourism industry, many consider this skill to be absent in graduates (Jackson 2014:24; Redelinghuys and Drevin 2019).

Bharwani and Talib (2017:399) argues that formal education is a significant factor in building competencies such as financial management, strategic management, sales and marketing and must be delivered in a manner that complement the development of personal competencies as both are equally important in an information-based, knowledge-driven and service-oriented economy. Mcmanus and Rook (2021:272) advocated that WIL has a positive impact in the development of employability skills, assists students in identifying career path, helps in the development of their professional identity and increases the student's theoretical knowledge by applying it to a dynamic work setting. This type of learning was identified in (Kolb and

Kolb 2017:13) concept of experiential learning, whereby a student gains practical knowledge through hands-on experience by observing industry professionals and by participating in the day-to-day operations of the establishment (Carbone *et al.* 2020:972).

Bilsland *et al.* (2020:425) postulates that there are four characteristics that needs to be considered when structuring work-integrated learning programmes. Firstly, problems encountered within the hospitality and tourism sector cannot be easily identified or rectified as tourism services that are offered to clients are produced, presented, and consumed in one location. Secondly, hospitality and tourism services are labour intensive, which is reliant on its human capital to deliver service offerings to guests. Interactions with staff directly impact on the customer experience, hence having inexperienced, inert and who display unprofessional behaviour are deemed problematic and creates a negative experience for the customer. Thirdly, tourism customers set high standard and expect value for money when travelling. They often share their experiences with friends and family, and this could lead to bad publicity should they encounter a negative experience. Lastly customers come from various walks of life and may be unfamiliar with certain traditional beliefs and service agreements at cultural attractions, particularly if they are international tourist. Therefore, an effective WIL program must regulate these factors in a bid to produce industry ready graduates that are equipped and prepared for the future (*ibid*).

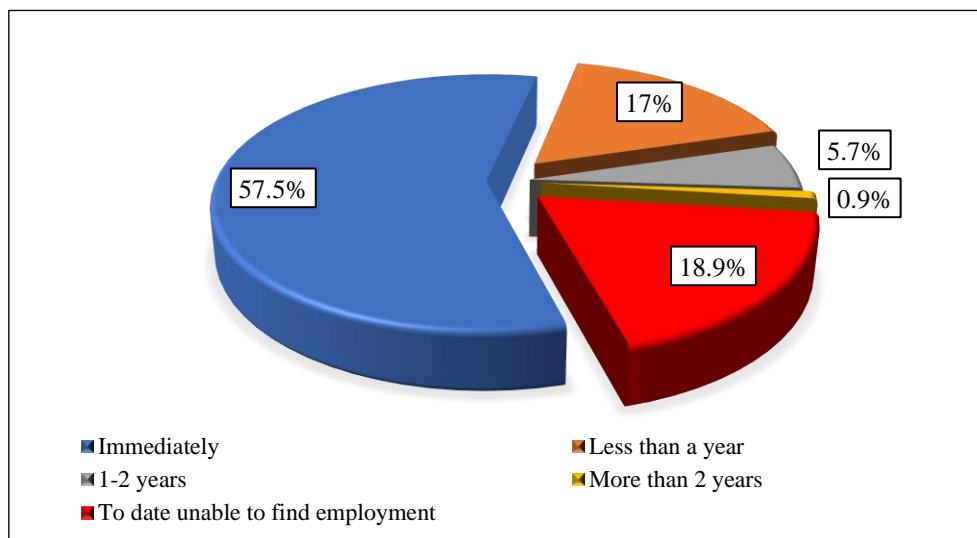


Figure 4.11: Time taken to obtain employment after graduation

Figure 4.11 presents the time graduates had taken to obtain employment after graduation. Evidently, 57.5% of the graduates indicated that to date they were unable to find employment within the tourism industry, 18.9% indicated that they obtained employment immediately after

graduation, 17% indicated that they obtained employment in less than a year, 5.7% indicated that they obtained employment between 1-2 years after graduation, and 0.9% of the graduates indicated that they obtained employment more than 2 years after graduation.

One of the key mandates of higher education institutions is the development of graduates' employability skills (Eldeen *et al.* 2018:961). Modern-day businesses are now searching for potential candidates who possess non-technical skills and have participated in a work-readiness programme as it is believed that these graduates will be more effective in the workplace (Jackson *et al.* 2017:35-36). A graduate's experiential learning should not exclusively be designed to provide them with attributes and techniques required to obtain employment but rather encourage them to set goals and standards that will set them apart from other potential graduates (Eldeen *et al.* 2018:961). In order to address these industry requirements, higher education institutions have identified WIL as an ideal vehicle to deliver real-world work experience through a structured undergraduate academic curriculum (Jackson *et al.* 2017:35-36).

According to Engelbrecht (2017:100) majority of businesses within the tourism industry requires an average of two to three years working experience, as many seek out human capital that are innovative, accountable and goal-driven in an effort to remain competitive in an ever-evolving economy (Jackson *et al.* 2017:35-36). In South Africa the needs of the tourism industry are currently being investigated by the National Department of Tourism (NDT), Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA) and Human Science Research Council (HSRC) as a way of developing an industry appropriate curriculum that will benefit the graduate, organisation and the economy (Engelbrecht 2017:100).

The tourism and hospitality industry are one of the fastest-growing industries globally and has the potential to provide graduates with employment opportunities (Wen, Li and Kwon 2019:159). One of the challenges that the industry encounters is recruiting and retaining an educated workforce and an increased volume of staff turnover. This issue may prove to be a detrimental factor concerning the growth and success of the tourism industry (Aynalem, Birhanu, and Tesefay 2016:1; Wen *et al.* 2019:159). Tourism can thrive if the industry invests in programmes that engage candidates who are well trained and are of the highest quality to ensure continuity and viability (Aynalem *et al.* 2016:1). Wen *et al.* (2019:159) further stated that the complexities and demands of the tourism profession and parental involvement have

hindered graduates from pursuing their future career. Therefore, it is vital that graduates are well informed of the stresses and gravity of the industry in order to prepare them to be more adaptable and flexible for a career in tourism (Aynalem *et al.* 2016:1).

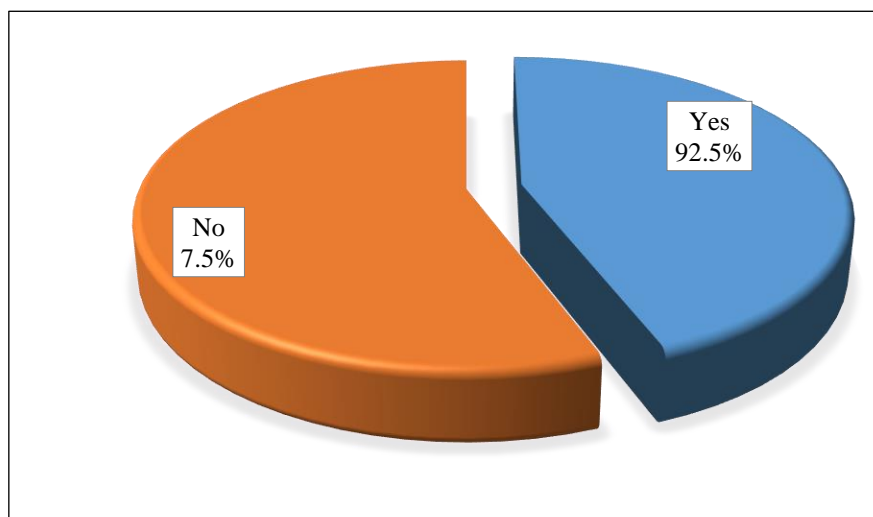


Figure 4.12: Curriculum content relevant to industry needs

According to the data in Figure 4.12, 92.5% of the graduates' indicated that the content in the tourism curriculum was relevant to the needs of the tourism industry. This is a positive result, as they could apply their theoretical knowledge to the duties and tasks that needed to be completed during their WIL placement. A further 7.5% of the graduates indicated that the content in the tourism curriculum was not beneficial during their WIL training. This is concerning, as this percentage reveals that these graduates could not apply the curriculum outcomes to their daily operations within the workplace.

Table 4.10: Aspects of the tourism curriculum relevant to industry needs

Is the content in the tourism curriculum relevant to the needs of the tourism industry	Percentage
The introduction of Galileo in the tourism curriculum is important, it will be easier for students to get employment in the industry	2.8
What was learned in the classroom was different from what is practised in the workplace	3.8
Customer service should be enhanced in the tourism curriculum	0.9

The findings in Table 4.10 indicate that 3.8% of the graduates highlighted what was taught in the classroom did not align with what is practiced in the tourism industry, which is diverse as compared to the predictable and controlled learning received at a higher education institution. A further 2.8% stated that Galileo should be incorporated into the tourism curriculum, as this

programme is important to secure employment in the industry. Additionally, 0.9% noted that customer service should be more enhanced in the curriculum as this skill is crucial to the daily activities of the industry.

The tourism industry has undergone several decades of transformation and evolution, and businesses today must adapt to the current changes that is rapidly engulfing the industry (Adeyinka-Ojo *et al.* 2020:114). Information Technology (IT) is advancing at an accelerated pace and has now become a key driver of the hospitality and tourism industry (Rabea, Saad and Abdel-Aleem 2018:124). The expansion of innovative technological development and communication techniques has led to a shift from the manufacturing era to the age of disruptive technological advancement which plays an instrumental role in expanding tourism in the 21st century (Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2019:64). The goal of Information Technology (IT) is to integrate all hotel operations, increases productivity, improve the customer experience, restructure the marketing functions, and it assists managers in managing inventory and controlling assets within the hospitality and tourism industry (Rabea *et al.* 2018:124).

As the modern-day world is progressively advancing in technologies, the need for personnel with digital skills and knowledge are required in the hospitality and tourism industry as a result of innovative business models and business procedures. Graduates from higher educational institutions ought to have a proactive understanding of technological know-how and the ability to operate these systems to extract applicable and reliable information for the business to gain a competitive edge in the marketplace and be strategic in businesses processes (Adeyinka-Ojo *et al.* 2020:114). Amadeus is one of the many reservation systems that is currently being used in the tourism and hospitality industry and if students are educated on how these systems function, they will be able to transition effectively and successfully into the industry. Training and development are critical to the success of service-based businesses and therefore educational institutions need to include the reservation systems that are currently being used into the structure of the curriculum, thereby allowing the graduates to be more employable upon graduation (Rabea *et al.* 2018:124; Wakelin-Theron *et al.* 2019:64).

The technological advancements within the hospitality and tourism sector have placed increased pressure on these businesses to integrate an element of human interaction in order to enhance customers experience which may be critical for survival (Kandampully and Solnet 2019:248-249). Considering the growing number of international tourists and their diverse backgrounds, providing exceptional customer service necessitates that new skills and

knowledge must be developed to meet the customer's expectations on a global scale. Employees within the tourism and hospitality industry have expressed that they are often influenced by their emotional state, attitudes, and actions which has a direct impact on their performance and the quality of service provided (Johnson, Park and Bartlett 2018:192). In order for tourism businesses to remain competitive and successful, they need to attract well-trained and well-educated staff who are able to provide superior products and services (Renfors, Veliverronena and Grinfelde 2020:126). Hence, by investing in such a calibre of workforce, the organization will earn the trust of its clientele who will share their experiences with the world and ensure sustained success (Kandampully and Solnet 2019:248-249).

Table 4.11: General comments regarding WIL

General comments	Percentage
WIL is an important element and universities must select host organizations based on their ability to build employability skills into graduates	9.4
Covid pandemic hindered learning experiences due to the global travel restrictions	7.5
WIL is important although unfair working conditions, long working hours with no compensation has limited career growth	2.8
DUT as a well-structured WIL curriculum although employment opportunities are limited	14.2
The tourism management curriculum and modules are relevant, but technological modules (reservation systems) need to update to increase students' employability	5.7
Tourism curriculum needs to be updated to meet the needs of industry	4.7
WIL was much easier than the academic phase of learning	1.9
WIL assisted me to find employment within the tourism industry	2.8
The tourism industry as diverse tourism offering which made working in the industry interesting and stimulated personal growth	3.8
The time frame of WIL needs to be reconsidered as six months is too short	2.8
The tourism industry requires tourism experience rather than a tourism management qualification	1.9
WIL aided in building self-confidence, customer service and communication	2.8
The entrepreneurship modules should be enhanced within the curriculum due to the lack of employment opportunities	0.9
There are many entry level opportunities within the tourism industry, but the compensation is low	0.9
The tourism and hospitality qualification should not be separated as it is one industry	0.9
The WIL coordinator needs to visit graduates at host organizations to ensure that graduates are not being exploited as cheap labor	0.9
Other	7.5

Table 4.11 presents the responses of the graduates regarding opinions concerning their general comment question. There was a total of 106 graduates who participated in this research study but only 76 graduates responded to this question. The responses provided by the graduates were

grouped for easy interpretation in table 4.11. The results indicate that 14.2% of the graduates stated that they had a well-structured and effective WIL curriculum, although employment opportunities are very limited. Whilst 9.4% of the graduates revealed that WIL plays an instrumental role in enhancing their product knowledge, however the university needs to select host organisations who are willing to assist them in building employability skills. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, 7.5% of the graduates mentioned that their learning experiences were hindered, and it proved to be challenging due to the global travel restrictions. Also of note is that 5.7% of the graduates rated the tourism management curriculum and its modules as relevant, but technological modules (reservation systems) need to be incorporated in order to increase their employability, and a further 4.7% of the graduates concurs with the above comment that the tourism curriculum needs to be updated to meet the tourism industry expectation.

The data also revealed that 3.8% of the graduates noted that the tourism industry is diversified in its tourism offering and therefore being employed in the industry encouraged their personal awareness and professional development. A few graduates (2.8%) agreed that WIL is an important component of learning, however unfair working conditions, long working hours with no compensation has limited their career progression. They also mentioned that WIL aided in building self-confidence, developed their customer service skills, improved their communication abilities, and WIL provided them an opportunity in commencing a career in the tourism industry, however the graduates identified that the time frame of WIL needs to be reconsidered as six months is not adequate to develop the necessary expertise. In addition, 3.8% (1.9% x 2) of the graduates asserted that the tourism industry requires tourism experience rather than a tourism management qualification, yet there were some graduates who stated that WIL assisted them in securing employment within the tourism industry. Thereafter, less than 1% of the graduates affirmed that the tourism and hospitality qualification should not be separated as it is one industry, there are many entry level opportunities within the tourism industry but the compensation is low, the WIL co-ordinator needs to visit the host organisations to ensure that graduates are not being exploited as cheap labour and the entrepreneurship module should be enhanced within the tourism curriculum due to the lack of employment opportunities.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the primary data collected through online questionnaires from graduates who completed their Work Integrated Learning. The aim of the study was to assess the ND: tourism management curriculum and how it impacted the graduates WIL

experience. These findings were presented in the form of graphs and tables. A detailed interpretation and discussion of results was undertaken, based on the key objectives and themes of the research. The discussion of the data focused on establishing linkages between primary data, secondary data from literature as well as fundamental conclusions to be made from this study, and to put forward justifications for recommendations. The final chapter will provide conclusions drawn from this study's findings and will provide recommendations based on the conclusions and suggestions for future researchers.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a detailed discussion of the findings of the study. This study aimed to assess the tourism curriculum at DUT and its effect on the WIL experience. The summary, conclusions, and recommendations will be presented in this chapter. The study limitations will also be briefly discussed in this chapter. This chapter is dedicated to interpreting and discussing the findings in line with the study's objectives to conclude. The interpretation and discussion that follows the aim are to provide inferences on assessing the tourism management curriculum and its impact on the WIL experience. The chapter also offers recommendations for resolving issues raised in the problem statement and recommendations for future research on the tourism curriculum and how it influences the graduate's educational journey as they transition from the academic phase of learning to the challenges of the working environment. The structure of the chapter is presented according to the three key objectives of the study, which were:

- To explore students' experience of WIL in the tourism management programme,
- To examine the extent to which the tourism curriculum prepared students for WIL,
- To ascertain if any gaps exist in the tourism curriculum concerning WIL.

The study's overall results indicated that the graduate's WIL experience was beneficial, and that the tourism management curriculum addressed the skill set required by the tourism industry. The students noted that they could adapt to the complexities of the working environment during their engagement with the tourism sector. Many challenges were identified and encountered during the graduate's WIL experience. These include difficulty in adapting to the organisational culture, insufficient knowledge of technological systems such as Galileo, irregular/ long working hours, lack of knowledge in undertaking work duties, no compensation, no induction at the start of the WIL program, and the inability of balancing work and WIL simultaneously. Although these issues were raised, most of the graduates who participated in this study highlighted that all elements within the skill set were adequately addressed in the tourism management curriculum. The graduates also agreed that all subjects offered within the tourism management curricula were relevant and that their knowledge prepared them during their WIL training. During their involvement with the WIL program, graduates gained knowledge from experienced employees in the host organisation, which led to the developing

of new skills. As a result of the ND: tourism management programme offered by the Durban University of Technology, graduates agreed that the content was relevant and developed the necessary employability skills to operate successfully in the tourism industry. However, most of the respondents in this study indicated that it was challenging to obtain and secure employment in the tourism industry upon completing their studies.

5.2 Summary of key findings

This section will summarise this study's key findings following the research objectives based on the research objectives. It is intended to address and answer the research questions, and the findings will provide the basis for recommendations, and the purpose of this research will be accomplished.

5.2.1 Objective One: To explore students' experience of WIL in the ND: tourism management programme.

One of the focus areas of the research was to explore the student's experience of WIL within the ND: tourism management programme offered at a University of Technology. The study revealed that 75.5% of the graduates were currently not employed within the tourism sector and had to seek employment in various other economic sectors in South Africa. This is an alarming phenomenon, as most students hold a National Diploma in Tourism. Therefore, it is crucial to explore whether a student's experience/ interaction during work-integrated learning impacted their career choice. The graduates participating in WIL were allowed to interact with the tourism industry for six months to increase their practical knowledge of the tourism sector. They were asked to evaluate the tourism management curriculum and how it influenced their performance during their WIL experience. The key findings revealed that most tourism graduates who participated in this research agreed that each skill set was adequately addressed in their curriculum, which positively impacted their work integration. These skills are integral to a graduate's academic learning and are highly valued by potential tourism employers.

The graduates highlighted that WIL was enhanced by their ability to think critically, problem-solve and be self-aware. Most of the graduates in this study highlighted that the above skill set was effectively addressed in the curriculum. These skills were vital and required by the relevant tourism organisations. While at WIL, the graduates demonstrated the ability to diagnose, isolate, evaluate and implement the correct measures in the workplace when necessary. They were confident in interpreting data, a common practice within the tourism industry. The ability to think critically has become a globally recognized skill crucial for life-long learning and career advancement. The graduates were satisfied with how the curriculum embedded these

elements into the academic content and found that the concepts taught provided a firm foundation for their practical training. This may benefit educational institutions and industry employers with well-trained and highly skilled personnel. Educational institutions consider the WIL programme an effective tool in preparing students to interact with the tourism sector, which is part of the programme's objective. WIL is designed to provide students with direct exposure to the functions and practices of the tourism industry.

The survey findings also reveal that graduates emphasised learning different communicative techniques and working effectively with others, developing new initiatives and enterprise, social responsibility and accountability, and organisational awareness were vital skills that helped them adapt to the demands of the working environment. Most of the graduates in this study were satisfied with the above skill set as it played a productive role in their work-integrated learning. The graduates highlighted that upon entering the tourism industry, and they were expected to possess fundamental skills such as the ability to articulate fluently, non-verbal and listening skills, creativeness, innovation and the capacity to communicate with tourists from different cultural backgrounds. The graduates stated that it was essential to understand these soft skills as it improved their ability to interact with tourists, collaborate with team members and prove their worth in the workplace. It is crucial to have a good work ethic when operating in the business arena, especially in a highly competitive market such as tourism. Graduates noted that honesty, integrity and accountability are essential characteristics of work ethics, and these qualities played a significant role in their personal and professional development. The use of technology and the ability to analyse data has become a vital component that tourism organisations require. The graduates in this study indicated that computer and internet technologies were essential to the learning process. The quality of technological content offered within the tourism management curricula helped them integrate more effectively and efficiently.

The WIL module enabled the graduates to develop practical skills and personal qualities such as initiative and time management. As indicated by the graduates, the tourism management curriculum effectively gave them the essential skills to thrive during WIL, producing a positive and fulfilling experience. However, the study findings also disclosed that the graduates encountered challenges at WIL. Most of the respondents indicated that no compensation, irregular/long working hours, lack of sufficient training on job functions, insufficient knowledge in operating technological systems (e.g., Galileo, Amadeus), difficulty in adapting to the organisational culture, little or no induction at the start of their WIL program and the

lack of knowledge in undertaking work duties were some of the challenges that were faced during their engagement with the tourism industry. Although, the majority of graduates confirmed that they are still willing to pursue a career in the tourism industry.

5.2.2 Objective Two: To examine how the tourism curriculum prepared students for WIL

The main objective of this study was to examine the extent to which the ND: tourism management curriculum prepared students for WIL. Considering the graduates' perceptions of workplace learning is of value as it reflects their proper mindset. Adapting to new working conditions and challenges depends on an individual's level of preparedness. This may result in positive and negative views regarding their pursuit of careers within the tourism industry. Many graduates believe participating in the WIL programme is a steppingstone to reaching their personal and professional career goals. Graduates with a negative attitude towards workplace learning may also sow seeds of discontentment with those who may be positively motivated to excel in this field. It is, therefore, essential to identify to what extent graduates are prepared throughout their academic phase. The findings revealed that most graduates asserted that the ND: tourism management curriculum adequately prepared them with the knowledge and expertise required to fully understand the concepts and realities of a career within the South African tourism market.

The time frame in which graduates completed their WIL was sufficient to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to operate effectively within their host organisations. The graduates also highlighted that they could actively participate in operational practices and precisely accomplish technical tasks due to their theoretical knowledge, which enhanced their overall performance during WIL. Tourism graduates and higher education institutions share a similar view on the importance of some subjects taught in the current tourism curricula. Tourism academics are often viewed as having a broader understanding of tourism aspects and are not inclined to incorporate commercially oriented subjects into the tourism management curricula. The focus of academics is to create a sustainable driven mindset for learners to guarantee the longevity of the environment in which tourism operates for future generations. The inclusion of tourism development within the tourism curricula signifies higher education's determination to develop tourism leaders who can minimise the impacts of tourism, implement responsible policies and practices, and manage tourism attractions efficiently, which was evident from the graduate's responses regarding the role this subject played in their curriculum.

Subjects regarding management have also received recognition, allowing them to integrate into the working environment seamlessly. Tourism content relating to general management skills and administrative functions of tourism businesses, purchasing and production, human resource management, risk management, catering management and financial management were deemed indispensable by graduates during their practical training. Graduates inferred that these subjects motivated them to apply their academic knowledge and training to issues encountered during WIL, resulting in a more enriched learning experience. One subject undoubtedly key to the success of graduates' integration into the tourism industry was travel and tourism practice. A substantial percentage of the respondents referred to this subject as an essential component that aided their preparation. The findings indicated that graduates could understand and implement their theoretical knowledge when dealing with travel agencies and tour operations; having a clearer perspective on destination management and being focussed on customer care has created an authentic learning experience. The growth of the South African tourism industry is dependent on the right marketing strategies being employed in order to attract tourists to the country. Marketing themes and concepts are an ever-present requirement for graduates to understand the various components that make up South Africa's unique strategic marketing plan, which is vital for the sustainability of the country's tourism sector. It was apparent from the findings that students placed value on the content that covered strategic marketing, analysing the competitive tourism markets and executing the relevant strategies, understanding consumer and buying behaviour and the ability to perform a SWOT analysis on marketing campaigns which allowed them to gain a competitive edge in a target driven industry. With the inclusion of marketing in the tourism curriculum, graduates were able to benefit by having a greater understanding of tourist flow, increased their ability to interpret data from forecasting and modelling tools, consider the type of marketing activities that need to be implemented and able to calculate the degree to which they impact tourist demand when aiming to capture a specific market. Therefore, the responses given by the graduates highlighted the importance of creating context around tourism marketing strategies.

With the global advancement of technology outstripping conventional communication and tourism functions, graduates must be equipped with the technical know-how regarding correctly using the current tourism operational systems. Technology in the modern era reaches far beyond sending and receiving electronic mail; it has become a platform for tourism organisations to market products and packages, communicate with consumers outside of regular business hours and become a robust marketing tool due to the prominence of social

media networks. Unfortunately, many educational institutions have limited resources when tasked with covering all the technical aspects required by the industry. However, most respondents had indicated that the subject end-user computing was necessary as it allowed them to operate various systems and applications, process word documents and spreadsheets, manage data and utilise the internet to complete duties assigned to them. Therefore, the understanding gained from this subject afforded them a solid foundation from which they could build their technical expertise.

While communication is simple, there are underlying themes and concepts that, when taken out of context, can alter the message of what is being said. The graduates participating in this study validated the need for good communication skills, which warrants the inclusion of communication within the tourism management curriculum. The graduates highlighted that learning about the communication process was paramount to the success of their WIL experience as it allowed them to break down barriers, develop cross-cultural communication, enhance their non-verbal communicative techniques and improve their listening skills which are essential in building interpersonal relationships and resolving conflicts within the workplace. The tourism sector is a service-driven industry that relies on good communication between all role players involved in the tourism process. A key element to the success of tourism within South Africa is the ability to communicate with the different types of tourists that frequent our country. Communicating with tourists from countries such as Germany, France, and China provide a competitive edge for organisations targeting international tourists. The graduates that participated in this study had conflicting views regarding the inclusion of German as a foreign language, with many of them not regarding this subject as a critical element of the curricula. Therefore, educational practitioners at higher education institutions should evaluate how students are prepared before they engage in WIL. Students' readiness is essential to apply their knowledge and skills in a host organisation.

5.2.3 Objective Three: To ascertain if any gaps exist in the tourism curriculum concerning WIL

Another critical area of this research was to ascertain if any gaps may exist in the ND: tourism management curriculum concerning a graduate WIL experience. To bridge the gap between the tourism industry's employability requirements and the academic goals of higher education institutions, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs were introduced to give students opportunities to improve their skills and gain a greater understanding of how the tourism industry operates. Significant pressure is placed on students to digest essential information and

apply theoretical content into practice to become more employable in the tourism industry. However, gaps persist despite academic efforts to create a well-balanced curriculum that considers industry requirements. It is of value to explore these gaps and to seek out suitable ways to minimise the impact it may have on a student's ability to hone their employability skills during WIL. The findings revealed that graduates encountered an array of challenges that limited the effectiveness of the WIL programme. Although most of the graduates indicated that the tourism management curriculum was relevant, a few highlighted that the curricula lacked updated technological modules (reservation systems such as Galileo, Sabre, Worldspan and Amadeus).

The tourism industry is rapidly evolving within the industrial revolution 4 (IR4) and has therefore invested heavily in technology to grow new markets and maintain new clientele. Educational institutions with technological infrastructure and capable of teaching technological skills to graduates will improve the outlook of the ND: Tourism Management programme, as technologically competent students, are better inclined to be employed in the tourism industry. The lack of technical competencies can contribute to tourism graduates' difficulties when seeking employment, as businesses may view this as a risky investment. Graduates indicated that educational institutions must select host organisations based on their ability to build employability skills into graduates. The WIL component of the academic curriculum is a supervised platform where the learning outcomes for WIL can be measured to monitor the effectiveness of the host organisation in integrating the theoretical aspects into the realities of the working environment. The host organisation needs to play an active role in developing skills and training, which is vital for the student's WIL experience. It is, therefore, crucial that educational institutions identify competent host organisations that are willing to build industry-specific skills in new graduates.

The data revealed that some students lacked site visits from the WIL coordinator and could not convey the challenges they encountered during WIL. In overseeing the WIL programme, the WIL coordinator plays a crucial role in ensuring that graduates are not exploited as cheap labour, who are forced to endure unfair working conditions and are required to work long hours without compensation. This undoubtedly will have an adverse effect on how students experience the tourism industry. It is, however, imperative to highlight that students need practical skills that can only be provided through their integration within a working tourism environment. Without industry exposure, students will not experience the full benefits of their academic qualifications. It is critically vital that educational institutions take time to analyse

the nature of the tourism business where students will be placed, the implications that this may have on a student's learning ability, and the effectiveness of their industry mentors in imparting knowledge to students, all of which can contribute to the quality of a student's experience.

One of the concerns that graduates mentioned was the lack of opportunities to critically evaluate and apply theories and skills they had learned in the classroom to the workplace. Learners can gain and remember information when they are actively involved in the learning process and when they can implement what they have learned in a real-world scenario. Therefore, the design of an effective WIL program must incorporate relevant elements. Such elements include the proposed learning objectives, the different teaching strategies, the type of learning resources, activities and assessments that measure a student's ability during the learning process, and the criteria used to evaluate the learning process are all fundamental to students' development. If students cannot demonstrate an alignment between their theoretical learning and their ability to apply skills, participating in WIL may not result in them achieving the intended learning outcomes. During WIL, the assessment activities used should align with the learning objectives outlined in the curriculum. This will enable students to interpret their learning more accurately. Education institutions can also use this method to assess and monitor their students' progress. As a result, they will be able to determine whether students are learning the curriculum objectives and whether the goals of the tourism management curriculum are met. Hence, this will yield intrinsically motivated students who will be self-driven to create new concepts and knowledge. In this way, students will have the capacity to develop a progressive mindset instead of a stagnant one, which will enhance their learning experience and influence their level of performance.

5.3 Recommendations

There were several concerns, such as no compensation, irregular/long working hours, insufficient knowledge of operating technological systems, and lack of knowledge in undertaking work duties. Educational institutions must work cohesively with the tourism industry to ensure that graduates have a positive experience during WIL. Employers in the tourism sector should abide by the South African government's labour laws regarding mandatory working hours. The law stipulates that employees must work 45 hours per week and that public holidays, weekends, and night shifts should be compensated with additional pay. The tourism industry must introduce and implement flexible work schedules for the graduates as this will allow them to balance work and family life. This will be mutually beneficial to both the employee and the employer. Satisfied employees are more productive, leading to a higher

retention rate in the tourism industry. The employers will experience a reduction in staff turnover and lower expenses, and the level of productivity will be enhanced, resulting in greater profits for the business. Some graduates indicated they had a limited understanding of the industry's employment conditions before WIL. Tourism educators play an essential role in alleviating this problem by providing a detailed overview of what the working conditions are like for graduates in terms of compensation, working hours and potential career opportunities they can pursue. Graduates must understand this in advance to minimise the gap between their expectations and perceptions before entering the workforce. Students should be allowed to interact with employees at tourism organisations in order to assist and inform them about the induction process at the start of their WIL programme, how they can adapt to the organisational culture, and the knowledge required in operating technological systems such as Galileo and Amadeus before their WIL placement. Higher education institutions must incorporate tourism-specific technical training on relevant tourism-related systems into their curriculum that is currently in use in the tourism industry. As a result, graduates will have higher self-awareness and understanding, positively influencing their interaction and participation with the WIL programme.

Tourism academics and industry stakeholders need to build a cooperative relationship ensuring pertinent information is embedded in the curriculum that will assist learners in adapting during their experiential learning. The decisions made by academics and tourism industry personnel can positively contribute to developing a structured tourism curriculum and impact a learner's ideology and performance during WIL. In addition, many tourism programs require graduates to carry out Work Integrated Learning (WIL) as a formal component of their academic program, and these work experiences must be successful. For this to happen, academics and industry stakeholders must work together to create high-quality work-integrated learning programs. This programme will allow the institution to meet the constant demands of an ever-changing tourism economy. Therefore, the tourism curriculum content needs to be current, linking key competencies to student-learning outcomes to prepare students with the relevant skills and competencies expected from them upon entering the tourism industry; it is imperative that skills and training are assimilated into the curriculum to facilitate a smooth transition into the working environment. This will ensure industry standards are met, and graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to discover that a profession in tourism may be a rewarding career path.

In South Africa, tourism is seen as an economic driver and a generator of employment. Tourism education is considered a mechanism that improves the quality and standard of tourism services. For tourism to thrive in South Africa, the tourism industry must continue to grow and evolve. This can be achieved through a dynamic workforce that can enable change by implementing sustainable practices, which will help ensure that tourism continues to contribute positively to the country's economy. The tourism curriculum must incorporate all stakeholders within the design and execution. In order to promote the advancement of tourism in the country, higher education institutions are encouraged to develop a curriculum that meets both academic expectations and industry demands. They are urged to adopt innovative approaches and integrate sustainable philosophies into the curriculum layout, engaging and captivating the students during the learning process. However, there still lies a challenge in the design of a high-yielding curriculum. Although the curriculum details the professional knowledge of academics and the specialised expertise of industry stakeholders, it will be ineffective without the crucial views of the graduates.

To solicit industry participation, education providers can establish advisory committees consisting of relevant tourism stakeholders. At such meetings, tourism employers can express their opinions on the content that should be included in the tourism curricula, the skills graduates should possess to succeed in the workforce, and how the formal curricula can be guided and modified. It would be instrumental for educational institutions to provide a platform for industry stakeholders to offer students updates on changes in the tourism industry and to deliver regular presentations to them regarding these changes. This will create an atmosphere that facilitates productive learning and will support students in reaching their maximum performance level during their WIL experience. This partnership should be mutually beneficial, with tertiary institutions learning to value the contribution of industrial mentors' practical and technical expertise and industry experts gaining a better understanding of what to expect from students before they can engage in WIL. As a result, the host organisations can focus on critical areas of training that graduates need to acquire expertise. This will support the growth of tourism professionals with an in-depth understanding of how the tourism industry operates and functions holistically.

The importance of theoretically studying tourism cannot be overstated; educational institutions need to incorporate more practical training into their curriculums. In a module on tour operations, for instance, it would be appropriate to include practical introductory information about developing inbound and outbound travel packages. This is in addition to the different

reservation systems used in developing these travel packages. Examples of reservation systems include Worldspan, Sabre, Tour Plan, Opera, and Travel Logic. The training of these reservation systems should gradually be incorporated into the tourism curriculum since these systems play a pivotal role in the employment opportunities available to tourism graduates. The enacted curriculum should provide students with educational opportunities through industry-specific field trips and regularly scheduled guest lectures from industry professionals. As a result of this activity, students and the academic staff will gain a deeper understanding of the day-to-day operations of the tourism industry.

Through the facilitation of stimulating learning activities, students will overcome any barriers and be self-confident in their abilities. The active observation and reflection of workplace exercises by students in their academic learning will enhance their ability to gain work-related knowledge, acquire relevant skills, and apply their theoretical knowledge to a practical application during their engagement with the industry. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate the views of industry partners when developing curriculum objectives that facilitate identifying critical competencies, providing students with up-to-date discipline content, and ensuring that students receive an education that meets current industry standards. To identify gaps and similarities in competencies, a quality assurance process must be created. Work-integrated learning is seen as a tool to improve learners' competencies and implementing a student evaluation system is crucial in assessing and monitoring students' progress and the effectiveness of the WIL program. The continuous development of the curriculum can enhance students' performance during their WIL experience while positively impacting their career trajectory.

WIL is often characterised as a programme that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical workplace application to form a holistic educational experience for students. Students who commence with WIL may feel apprehensive about their preparedness to enter the tourism industry. However, they may view their exposure to the working environment as a valuable asset for enhancing their employability after graduation. Employers can discover a student's interests, capabilities, and value by participating in the WIL program. With South Africa's tourism industry proliferating and aiming to meet global standards and demands, students with an education in tourism are becoming increasingly sought-after candidates. It is the responsibility of higher education practitioners to prepare students' frame of mind for their workplace experience. They are responsible for setting the foundations for students' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions to stand them in good stead during their WIL program.

This can be achieved by conducting simulated exercises by integrating industry-specific problems that students can solve and introducing them to decision-making techniques based on different scenarios that can be role-played in a classroom environment. The performance of these tasks in the safety of the classroom will strengthen students' self-esteem and instil in them a high level of confidence, allowing them to become motivated, self-driven, and self-reliant in their ability to handle complex challenges in the workplace.

Student ideologies stem from the close relationship they have built with their WIL coordinator, who is responsible for ensuring students are adequately prepared during the WIL programme. It is crucial to regularly foster collaboration and on-site visits between industry mentors, students, and educational institutions to clarify industry expectations, develop knowledge of educational requirements, and gain insight into students' expectations. Students must be informed of their responsibilities and roles at their host organisation. This can be achieved by including innovative course design, which incorporates tourism industry professionals into structured lectures of the WIL curricula. As part of the WIL curricula, these lectures could be introduced as early as the second year of the tourism programme, giving students a deeper understanding of the WIL programme. During these structured lessons, students can address questions that concern them and participate in discussions regarding industry-related problems and challenges.

During this course, students will cover questions related to work ethics, compensation, technological skills that may be required to operate the different tourism reservation systems, and administrative duties. This is to ensure that students have clear guidelines underpinned prior to WIL. Students will better understand how the WIL programme can help develop their skills and expertise in addressing these concerns. As a result of being aware of the realities of the tourism industry, a student can set achievable goals and realistic milestones, resulting in rational perceptions based on facts rather than ideologies. This information will ensure that a student has fewer misconceptions and uncertainty regarding the start of WIL. With this proposed addition to the current course design, students will be equipped with an accurate reflection of the realities of the working conditions in the tourism industry. Also, it is vital to provide students with the opportunity to participate in industry workshops and conferences to enhance their level of experience and self-awareness. In turn, they will gain a more detailed understanding of the tourism industry. Students' perceptions may be formed through confidence-building training conducted by tourism industry instructors. Through this, students will be able to develop positive attitudes, as they will be capable of coping with the demands

and pressures of the rapidly changing tourism industry. Increasing students' exposure to industry-specific tasks and projects will help them gain confidence in their abilities. The study recommends that the delivery of information technology competencies needs to be re-evaluated and aligned with industry requirements. One of the critical areas of the curriculum that must be addressed is the preparation of students in how to apply technological competencies and effectively utilise industry-specific software. In addition to the technological modules currently offered at educational institutions, there is an urgent need for students to be trained in relevant systems used in the tourism industry, such as Amadeus and Galileo. As a result, students will be self-drive and confident of achieving success and excelling in their technological abilities during their WIL training. They can contribute effectively to their host organisation and reach their personal goals.

5.4 Limitations of the study

As with any research, there are limitations, and the primary limitation of this study is that it was conducted in a single academic institution. The researcher used one University of Technology (UoT) to conduct this study. This was because of the researcher's affiliation with this institution and having greater access to student data. The researcher evaluated students registered for the ND: Tourism Management, which limited the generalizability of the study since faculties may modify their WIL programs to reflect industry expectations. Furthermore, this sample does not fully represent the larger pool of tourism graduates from South African academic institutions offering similar tourism programs. To assess the extent to which the tourism curriculum prepares students for their WIL placement, a comparative study of all UoTs and comprehensive universities in South Africa should be conducted. The study was also limited due to some tourism graduates residing in different geographical locations and the absence of updated student information, making it difficult to include some of them in the study sample.

During the distribution of the online questionnaire, nearly half of the participants were unemployed and were not able to purchase data to complete the questionnaire. Moreover, many of the graduates reside on the outskirts of major cities, where access to internet connectivity may be limited, and this resulted in the initial low response rate. Although this study has achieved its objectives, it would have been beneficial if both academic, and industry stakeholders contributed to establishing a balanced interpretation of stakeholder viewpoints regarding students entering the WIL program. This would have allowed the researcher to analyse the study's findings and provide a greater analysis of objective one. The researcher

identified that proficiency in the English language may have affected the study results, as most respondents were not English-first language speakers. Therefore, they may have interpreted questions differently than the researcher intended.

5.5 Future research

Tourism within South Africa relies on the quality of education and training provided by higher education institutions and is paramount to the development of the industry. Tourism is a people-intensive sector that depends upon a highly skilled workforce, so education and training should be a priority. How education is dispensed is as important as what is being taught. Therefore, future research in teaching styles of the tourism curriculum needs to be investigated to evaluate the effectiveness of existing pedagogy on graduate employability, thereby reducing the skills gap between academic knowledge and workplace requirements. This research can be conducted with a qualitative approach to understand further the challenges faced by graduates seeking employment. By adopting a qualitative approach, the researcher may gain a richer understanding of the graduate's perception of being employed within the tourism industry and the skills required to excel within the tourism sector. Moreover, tourism educators should be examined regarding how they prepare tourism graduates for the realities of working within the dynamic, high-paced South African tourism industry. By drawing on the data from such a study, researchers may gauge the expectations of tourism graduates and whether or not they are prepared with the relevant knowledge, attitudes and perceptions for the stresses ahead.

Future research into the inclusion of specialised modules or curriculums should be conducted to advance graduate employability. This study revealed that 57.5% of tourism graduates have not been employed in or have been employed in the tourism industry. One key piece of data that was evident from this study was the need to update the current computer literacy curriculum, which should include online reservations and how they operate a booking system, thereby significantly improving the significance of the current tourism programme. Future research should also examine how the education providers select host organisations when placing graduates for WIL. Participants in this research indicated that they encountered challenges during their WIL. The host organisations were not adequately equipped to build the relevant industry-specific skills deemed essential to be employable after graduation. Therefore, an investigation into the process of a host organisation's ability to develop a graduate's capabilities may prove to be beneficial. Future research into the effects of a misaligned tourism curriculum by governmental departments (DHET) may prove vital in reducing the high levels of youth unemployment, especially relating to tourism graduates. The insight offered by such

a study may bring to light factors that expose the effect of a misaligned tourism curriculum and may also offer guidelines to reduce the gap related to employability skills.

5.6. Conclusion

Higher education curricula have adopted the WIL component to improve students' employability, and WIL has become an integral part of curricula in both domestic and international contexts. In addition to being a credit-bearing subject, it requires a comprehensive assessment of the student to improve their abilities and skills in the workplace. This research aimed to assess the tourism management curriculum at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and its effect on the WIL experience. Based on this aim, it was established that the National Diploma Tourism Management program did indeed prepare graduates to participate in WIL. The findings from this research and the supporting literature gave further insight into the challenges students encountered by assessing the responses from graduates who participated in the WIL programme. Many of the graduates revealed that although the theoretical aspect of the tourism curriculum adequately addressed the concepts and themes of being employed within the tourism sector, some were not able to apply technologically based programs/software systems effectively to their workplace due to a lack of depth in the tourism curricula.

It was also noted that host organizations were not adequately prepared to train graduates with the appropriate employability skills, and some had difficulty integrating and applying their theoretical knowledge in the workplace. The rapid technological advances experienced throughout the IR4 have placed extreme pressure on South Africa's national education and training systems to provide a quality education that can produce creative and effective graduates. The global war for dominance in the tourism industry is driving organisations to seek innovative ways to gain a competitive edge in a progressively global economic environment. Higher education institutions must encourage students to develop a culture of life-long learning and adapt to the ever-changing influences of the external environment in order to attain success. For this reason, this research aimed to highlight gaps in preparing students to integrate into the corporate world. This study highlighted areas of improvement relating to graduates' preparation before their commencement of WIL, and recommendations were made for higher educational institutions to consider.

Also, it suggested further research be conducted into teaching styles and methods of tourism educators, the inclusion of specialised training modules into the current tourism curriculum and

the selection process of host organisations and how effective they are in implementing the WIL framework. The above-suggested research could be conducted to bridge the gap between industry expectations and graduates' employability. Therefore, strategies need to be developed to meet the graduates' desired expectations, as the lack of clear guidelines and the absence of student engagement with industry mentors can produce discontentment amongst graduates. This may lead to graduates developing an antagonistic attitude towards the tourism industry and subsequently force them to consider exploring employment options in other sectors in pursuit of better-quality working conditions (Costa, Breda, Malek, and Durão 2013:142). Wingrove and Turner (2015:211) proposed that educational institutions should play an active role in assisting graduates to maintain a positive attitude by providing a well-structured course design with industry-specific knowledge which will support them in the workplace (Cord *et al.* 2011:163).

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APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INFORMATION



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: An assessment of the tourism curriculum and its impact on the WIL experience.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Mealine Coopasami (B Tech – Tourism management)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s:

Dr. R Sucheran

Durban University of Technology

E-Mail: reshma@dut.ac.za

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: Good day, I am a 2nd year student at DUT doing research for my M-Tech in Management Science. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. This study will seek to evaluate the current tourism curriculum offered by Universities of Technology and the challenges associated with Work Integrated Learning (WIL). The researcher intends to uncover potential gaps between the academic (course content) and experiential (Industry expectation) aspects of the curriculum.

What is Research: Research is a systematic search or enquiry for generalized new knowledge.

Outline of the Procedures: You have been invited to be a part of the data collection process for this study by participating in a short, self-completed online questionnaire during a selected time frame. You have been identified as a possible participant because you meet the criteria required for this study. You were a learner registered for the Tourism Management program and completed WIL from 2015 to 2019. You are required to complete a consent form to indicate your willingness to participate in the research process. Once confirmation has been received regarding the number of interested respondents, the researcher will proceed with distribution of the questionnaire. Follow up emails and telephonic correspondence will be sent to you requesting the completion of the questionnaires on a weekly basis. The online survey will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. You will be instructed on how to answer the questionnaire in the context of this study by the researcher. The entire survey must be completed, and no sections are to be left out.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: There are no risks involved in the participation of the survey.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study: This study will be administered on a voluntary participation basis. It is not compulsory for you to participate in this survey. You will not be enticed or manipulated by the researcher to agree to this survey.

Benefits: Enhancing the level of a student's knowledge and awareness regarding stakeholder's expectations and demands for WIL participants. This study is intended to assist students by offering academic options in developing a positive attitude which may support their progression and advancement in becoming great assets to the tourism industry. This study aims to understand the gap between the current curriculum content offered at tertiary institutions, what is expected during WIL and the reality and challenges of workplace experiences.

Remuneration: There will be no remuneration if you wish to partake in this study.

Costs of the Study: No cost will be incurred if you wish to partake in this study.

Confidentiality: Records will be kept confidential and will be available only to professional researchers and staff. If the results of this study are published, the data will be presented in group form, and you will not be identified. The use of numeric codes instead of names will ensure confidentiality of the data with none of your personal information appearing in the data collection.

Results: If the results of the study are published, the data will be presented in group form and individual participants will not be identified. The findings of this study can be made available to you on completion of the study.

Research-related Injury: No injuries are foreseen, and no compensation will be given.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings: The researcher will keep the verbatim records under lock and key. Completed measuring documents will be stored in a steel safe and will be kept for a period of five years, with the researcher being the only person with access to these documents. All electronic data will be kept on an external hard drive and deleted after a five-year period.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: Please contact the researcher (0748329387), my supervisor Dr. R Sucheran on 0836587426 or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganiso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT LETTER



Full Title of the Study: An assessment of the tourism curriculum and its impact on the WIL experience.

Names of Researcher/s: Mealine Coopasami

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Mعالine Coopasami about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 039/21.
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant

Date

Time

Signature / Right Thumbprint

I, Mealine Coopasami herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Mعالine Coopasami
Full Name of Researcher

14/05/2021
Date

Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

Date

Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian

Date

Signature

APPENDIX 3: ETHICS CLEARANCE



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

15 April 2021

Ms M Coopasami
50 Aspern Avenue
Croftdene
Chatsworth
4092

Dear Ms Coopasami

An assessment of the tourism curriculum and its impact on the WIL experience
Ethical Clearance number IREC 039/21

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Dr K Padayachy
Deputy Chairperson: IREC

APPENDIX 4: GATEKEEPERS LETTER



*Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Tromso Annexe, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946*

13th April 2021
Ms Mealine Coopasami
c/o Department of Hospitality and Tourism
Faculty of Management Sciences
Durban University of Technology

Dear Ms Coopasami

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) has granted **Gatekeeper Permission** for you to conduct your research "An assessment of the tourism curriculum and its impact on the WIL experience." at the Durban University of Technology. **Kindly note that this letter must be issued to the IREC for approval before you commence data collection.**

The DUT may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstances having regard to nature and extent of access to and use of information requested.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings would be submitted to the IRIC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely

DR LINDA ZIKHONA LINGANISO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE

APPENDIX 5: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE TOURISM CURRICULUM AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE WIL EXPERIENCE.

Questionnaire: Tourism Management

The Questionnaire will be completed by Tourism Management graduates who have concluded their Work Integrated Learning (WIL). All information/data collected from this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Please do not write your name as this study requires respondents to remain anonymous.

Instructions for the completion of the Questionnaire:

- Please use a cross in the appropriate box
- Please ensure that all questions are answered
- Please furnish brief responses where applicable

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please ensure that you have completed all the questions in this section:

1. Gender

Male	Female
------	--------

2. Current Age (in years)

Less than 21 years old	
21-25 years old	
26-30 years old	
30-35 years old	
35-40 years old	
More than 40 years old	

3. Was the ND: Tourism Management program your first choice when you began your studies at DUT?

YES

NO

4. In which year did you complete your National Diploma in Tourism Management?

2015	
2016	
2017	
2018	
2019	

5. In which sector of the tourism industry did you complete your WIL training?

Travel Agency	
Tour operator	
Car Hire	
Airlines	
Events Management	

Tourist Information centre	
Tourist Attractions	
Game Reserves	
Accommodation	
Municipalities	
Other	

*If the answer is **OTHER**, please specify in what type of sector*

6. Are you currently employed in the Tourism Industry?	YES	NO
--	-----	----

*If the answer is **YES**, please specify in which sector you are currently employed?*

Travel Agent	
Tour operator	
Car Hire Agent	
Airline Ground/Cabin Crew	
Events Co-ordinator	
Tourist Information Officer	
Tour Guide	
Game Park	
Accommodation (Front Office)	
Municipalities (Durban Tourism)	
Other	
Not applicable	

*If the answer is **OTHER**, please specify in what type of position*

7. How many years of work experience do you have in the tourism industry?	
Less than one year	
1-3 years	
4-6 years	
More than 6 years	
Have no work experience in the tourism industry	
Not applicable	

SECTION B: STUDENTS EXPERIENCE OF WIL

Please ensure that you have completed all the questions in this section:

1. What was your duration of WIL?	
1 month	
1-3 months	
4-6 months	
More than 6 months	

2. Did you undertake your WIL in one specific organization?	YES	NO
---	-----	----

<i>If the answer is NO, in how many organizations did you undertake your WIL?</i>

From your work experience during WIL, please rate the following skills according to whether, in your view, your curriculum addressed each of the following skill set. Place an X in the appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
3. Thinking critically					
Observation					
Analysis					
Interpretation					
Reflection					
Evaluation					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
4. Self-awareness					
Life-long learning					
Career management					
Higher level of thinking					
Self-confidence					

Self-motivation and perseverance					
----------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
5. Communicating effectively					
Verbal communication					
Public speaking					
Giving and receiving feedback					
Meeting participation					
Written communication					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
6. Working effectively with others					
Task collaboration and team working					
Cultural and diversity awareness					
Influencing others					
Relationship building					
Conflict resolution					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
7. Analysing data and using technology					
Information management					
Numerical skills					
Technological skills					
Research skills					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
8. Problem solving					
Decision making skills					
Analysing situations					
Diagnosing problems					
Identifying solutions					
	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
9. Self-management					
Self-regulation					
Stress tolerance					
Work/life balance					
Time Management					
	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
10. Social responsibility and accountability					
Social responsibility					
Personal accountability					
Personal ethics					
Social awareness and empathy					
Honesty and integrity					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
11. Developing initiative and enterprise					
Entrepreneurship					
Initiative					
Lateral thinking					
Creativity					
Change management					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not addressed in curriculum	Slightly addressed in curriculum	Unsure	Reasonably addressed in curriculum	Fully addressed in curriculum
12. Organisational awareness					
Developing professionalism					
Efficiency					
Multi-tasking					
Knowledge of organisation rules and regulations					
Cultural Knowledge					

13. What challenges did you face during your WIL experience? (Multiple responses permitted)	
The ability to balance WIL whilst being employed elsewhere	
No compensation	
Irregular/ long working Hours	
No induction at the start of the WIL program	
Lack of sufficient training on job functions	
Difficulty in adapting to the organisational culture	
Insufficient knowledge of technological systems (e.g., Galileo)	
Lack of knowledge in undertaking work duties	
Other	

*If the answer is **OTHER**, please specify?*

--

14. After completing my WIL experience, I am still willing to pursue a career in the tourism industry?	YES	NO
--	------------	-----------

SECTION C: TOURISM MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM

The following questions relates to the contribution of the tourism management curriculum.

Thinking about **all the units/subjects** you've studied so far in the National Diploma Tourism Management qualification, to what extent have the following applied to WIL?

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant
1. How relevant was the subject tourism development in your curricular, in preparing you for WIL?					
1.1. How relevant was the following tourism development content in your curriculum, in preparing you for WIL?					
Geography of tourism					
Impacts of tourism					
Sustainable tourism planning					
Tourism policy and regulations					
Tourism attraction development and management					
Crises and disaster management in tourism					
Tourism, global warming & climate change					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant
2. How relevant was the subject travel and tourism management in your curricular, in preparing you for WIL?					
2.1. How relevant was the following travel and tourism management content in your curriculum, in preparing you for WIL?					
General management and administrative function					
Purchasing and Production/service function					
Financial and Human resource function					
Entrepreneurship, Marketing and Public relations function					
Introduction, motivation and economic environment					
Service Strategy and Project Management					
Business plan preparation					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant
3. How relevant was the subject travel and tourism practice in your curricular, in preparing you for WIL?					
3.1. How relevant was the following travel and tourism practice content in your curriculum, in preparing you for WIL?					
Destination Knowledge					
Travel agency operations and procedures					
Air Travel					
Tour operations procedures					
Hospitality Management					
Tour Guiding					
Nature based tourism (Eco-tourism)					
Events based tourism					
Customer Care					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant
4. How relevant was the subject marketing for tourism in your curricular, in preparing you for WIL?					
4.1. How relevant was the following marketing for tourism content in your curriculum, in preparing you for WIL?					
Marketing information on South Africa					
Market measurement and forecasting					
The marketing mix					
Strategic marketing					
Environmental scanning					
Competition analysis and strategies					
Consumer and organisational buying and behaviour					
The SWOT analysis					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant
5. How relevant was the subject communication in your curricular, in preparing you for WIL?					
5.1. How relevant was the following communication content in your curriculum, in preparing you for WIL?					
Communication process					
Models					
Barriers					
Perception					
Cross-cultural communication					
Non-verbal communication					
Self-awareness					
Listening skills					
Conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships					
General Business Writing					
Oral Communication					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant
6. How relevant was the subject end-user computing (computer background theory) in your curricular, in preparing you for WIL?					
6.1. How relevant was the following end-user computing (computer background theory) content in your curriculum, in preparing you for WIL?					
Communication process					
Models					
Barriers					
Perception					
Cross-cultural communication					
Non-verbal communication					
Self-awareness					
Listening skills					

Conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships					
General Business Writing					
Oral Communication					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant

7. How relevant was the subject end-user computing (practical) in your curricular, in preparing you for WIL?

--	--	--	--	--	--

7.1. How relevant was the following end-user computing (practical) content in your curriculum, in preparing you for WIL?

Operating system commands and file management					
Word-processing					
Spreadsheets and graphics					
Record, file and database management programs					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant

8. How relevant was the subject events management in your curricular, in preparing you for WIL?

--	--	--	--	--	--

8.1. How relevant was the following events management content in your curriculum, in preparing you for WIL?

Introduction to events					
The event planning process & procedure					
Human resource					
Event sponsorship					
Risk Management					
Event marketing and communication					
Catering management for events					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant
9. How relevant was the subject foreign language (German) in your curricular, in preparing you for WIL?					
9.1. How relevant was the following foreign language (German) content in your curriculum, in preparing you for WIL?					
Pronunciation: Basic grammar					
Functional grammar: Comprehension Vocabulary and spelling					
Application of language in tourism					
German cultural background and physical feature of the country					

	1	2	3	4	5
	Extremely relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Slightly relevant	Not at all relevant
10. How relevant was the tourism management program, in preparing you to:					
The use of managerial and entrepreneurial values in developing tourism businesses.					
The use sustainable planning and development of tourism destinations and services.					
Maintaining suitable communication and social relationships with speakers of a foreign language.					
The ability to accomplish technical and operational tasks in the tourism industry.					
Effectively maintaining operational practices in a travel industry.					

SECTION D: GAPS IN THE TOURISM CURRICULUM IN RELATION TO WIL

	1	2	3	4	5
	Never	Sometimes	Unsure	Often	Always
1. To what extent did your university prepare you for WIL?					
I had a preparation program/resource that helped me prepare for WIL					
I had a preparation program or resources that helped me prepare to maximise my learning whilst on WIL					
I had time with my academic supervisor after WIL to reflect on my learning experiences					

I had time with my academic supervisor after WIL to discuss my experiences					
--	--	--	--	--	--

	1	2	3	4	5
	Never	Sometimes	Unsure	Often	Always

2. During the course of your WIL placement, how often did you:

Undertake work relevant to the learning outcomes?					
Undertake work relevant to the goals of the organisation you were placed in?					
Contributed valuable idea to the organisation (such as a product, or change in practice or policy)?					
Applied theories you had learned in class?					
Applied or developed skills you had learned in class?					
Critically evaluated theories you had learned in class?					

3. Are there any new skills which you have learnt from the WIL program that were not taught during class?	YES	NO
--	------------	-----------

If the answer is Yes, briefly list these new skills and rate them according to relevance.

--

4. What aspects of your WIL experience did you find most useful in preparing you for a career in the tourism industry?

--

5. Do you believe the role that you participated in during your practical training, helped develop your employability within the tourism industry?

YES

NO

If the answer is Yes, please explain briefly.

--

6. How long after graduating with your tourism management qualification were you able to obtain employment in the sector?

Immediately	
Less than a year	
1-2 years	
More than 2 years after	
To date, unable to find employment in tourism sector	

7. Indicate your level of difficulty in obtaining employment in the tourism sector?

Very difficult	
Difficult	
Relatively easy	
Very easy	

8. After completing your WIL training, do you believe that the content offered in the tourism program/curricular is relevant to the current tourism industry needs?

YES

NO

*If the answer is **NO**, please specify?*

General comments

APPENDIX 6: TURNITIN REPORT

I, Dr Reshma Sucheran, acknowledge the Turnitin Summary Report, and I am satisfied with the result.

30 October 2022

Dr Reshma Sucheran

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE TOURISM CURRICULUM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE WIL EXPERIENCE

ORIGINALITY REPORT

8% SIMILARITY INDEX
5% INTERNET SOURCES
6% PUBLICATIONS
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PRIMARY SOURCES

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APPENDIX 7: EDITORS REPORT

PROOF-READING AND EDITING REPORT

STUDENT: Mealine Coopasami

QUALIFICATION: Master of Management Sciences Specializing in Hospitality and Tourism

TOPIC: An Assessment of the Tourism Curriculum and its Impact on the WIL Experience

EDITOR: Dr V. Moodley

The dissertation has been reviewed and detailed comments have been made in the dissertation document. In particular, the following issues must be considered and adjusted accordingly:

- Correct all typos as highlighted in the document, including punctuation and grammar.
- Ensure consistency of your spelling (UK or US)
- Rewrite all poorly presented sentences (as highlighted in the dissertation) document, to improve readability and understanding. I have provided some suggestions.
- Ensure that your referencing style is correct and consistent, both in-text and in the reference list.
- Ensure that references included in the text are referenced and vice versa.
- In some instances, you need to improve word use and sentence structure. These have been highlighted in your document.
- Generate the table of contents page and list of figures and graphs using Word functions.
- Ensure that your style and captions of figures and tables are consistent. I have highlighted those that require adjustment.
- Ensure consistency of heading levels and styles. Use the Word functions to automatically generate headings.
- Ensure that your figures and tables must be placed within the text, as close to their first mention as possible.

- Define abbreviations upon first appearance in the text.
- Where highlighted in the document, re-structure the workflow and organize the content, to ensure all sections of the paper are coherent. Some sections are incoherent.
- You require more recent publications on WIL and the tourism curriculum to be integrated in your literature review.
- Ensure that the overall formatting of the dissertation is consistent with the submission guidelines of DUT.

Overall, the submission was of a very good quality and well written.

Signed:

_____	_____	28 October 2022
Dr V Moodley		Date