

AN EVALUATION OF HWSETA GRADUATE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

This programme pursues skill development by providing workplace experience to unemployed graduates who have already acquired their university qualifications. The HWSETA contract a number of varied organizations in the health and welfare sector to provide workplace experience to graduates as a form of an internship. The main goal of this programme is to provide workplace experience to university graduates in order to increase their prospects of finding employment. This study therefore aims to evaluate the appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness of the HWSETA graduate internship programme towards achieving its goal.

OBJECTIVES

The study pursued three objectives when evaluating the HWSETA internship programme. These objectives were aligned with the evaluation criteria as follows:

- **Appropriateness:** the study sought to establish the extent to which the programme's conception and planning speaks to the strategy of the HWSETA, its stakeholders and beneficiaries;
- **Efficiency:** the study sought to measure the extent to which the programme was able to use allocated resources and time to produce outputs;
- **Effectiveness:** the study sought to determine the extent to which set targets of the programme were achieved across the results chain using predefined standards of the organization.

DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation study adopted Theory-Based Approach (TBA) to explicitly bring forth the programme's theory and logic. A variety of research methods, such as the mixed method, were used to collect and analyze data.

RESULTS

The HWSETA graduate internship programme was found to be appropriate to the HWSETA strategic goals, stakeholders, and beneficiaries. The programme performed well against transformative and equity indicators for race, gender, age, and support for the rural. This highlights the responsiveness of HWSETA internship programme, as an intervention, in redressing inequities linked to class, race, gender, and age as identified in NSDS III. Concerning efficiency, the findings illustrate that a gap exists between planning and implementation. This gap has affected level of delivery (outputs) for this programme as only an average of 50% (1109) of graduates on internships completed the programme from the entire population enrolled (2238). In terms of effectiveness, the study found that 57% (324) of graduates in the sample (572) tracked for the tracer study found employment. Of all tracked graduates (572) that had entered and completed the internship programme in the NSDS III sample, 57% found employment, 20% furthered their studies, with only 12% that volunteered post the programme. This finding indicates that more than half of the graduates in the NSDS III sample progressed mainly to employment. While this performance of the programme accounts for more than half of learners finding employment in the sample it is far below the standard of success set at 80% employment rate. The nature of the employment found by the 324 graduates was as follows:

- **Sector that employed the most graduates:** Three quarters of graduates 75% (243) were employed by the public sector.

- **Employment rate by the same employer that offered on the job training:** Just above two-thirds of graduates 68% (220) were employed by the same employers that provided internship positions;
- **Duration of employment contract:** A majority of graduates 70% (226) were employed on permanent contracts, followed by 19% (61 graduates) employed on fixed-term contracts, and a minority of graduates, 11% (36) was employed on part-time contracts;
- **Salary level earned per month:** Almost half of the graduates 46% (150) earned salaries above R12800 per month;
- **Fringe Benefits received over and above salary:** Almost three-quarters of graduates, 71% (230) received employment contracts that offered a pension fund; and just above half, 53% (172) received employment contracts that offered a medical aid fund.

The articulation between qualification obtained by graduates and appointment into aligned occupations was at 86% as 280 graduates on internships found employment in occupations aligned to their qualifications.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that the HWSETA graduate internship programme is appropriate to the strategy of the HWSETA, its stakeholders and beneficiaries; but is not efficient in its implementation; and is to some degree ineffective since the programme did not yield the 80% standard of employment. The primary reason for programme implementation failure was a failure to manage the stakeholder relationships necessary for workplace capacity (more decommissions). The primary reason for programme ineffectiveness as it relates to outcomes was prioritization of qualifications both in the social sector and not required by the statutory body to undergo an internship. Yet more than two-thirds of employment from the programme was of the beneficiaries with qualifications in the health sector that were a requirement by the statutory body to undergo an internship. The highlight of the outcome of this programme is the rate of employment of graduates in internships by the same employers that gave them workplace experience. It is therefore recommended that the implementing officials of the graduate internship programme address the identified inefficiencies in order to improve deliverables. In pursuit of employment as an outcome objective of graduate internship programme for the unemployed, it is recommended that unemployed graduates with qualifications from the health sector be prioritized at 80% level from recruitment. Another tracer study will be conducted to find out whether some of the dropouts are not completions as some graduates may terminate their internship contracts because they found jobs and not because they dropped out.