

# Performing Arts: A case study on curriculum transformation<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, the Tshwane University of Technology's (TUT) Department of Performing Arts (Dance and Musical Theatre, Music and Vocal Art) has reinforced the importance of curriculum transformation in the changing South African landscape. This is due to the visible disequilibrium and insufficiency of the skills required by the industry in the previous curriculum. Therefore, The TUT Performing Arts Programme had to establish a new curriculum (artistic creativity, problem-solving, and business skills for performing arts) to accommodate the industry demand and to ensure that performers are relevant to the contemporary Performing Arts industry. This paper seeks to explore how students and lecturers experience the changes within the new curriculum at TUT as well as their perception of the significance of the transformed curriculum. A qualitative research methodology was used in this study, whereby methods such as interviews were conducted with Performing Arts students and graduates, lecturers, and employers in the industry. The research sought to establish how curriculum transformation is supported by the changed curriculum. The findings of this study demonstrate that the new curriculum will empower performers with balanced skill sets that enable them to become more marketable. The study also found that the new curriculum would provide sufficient entrepreneurial skills for performers to establish their businesses confidently. The paper concludes that TUT's new curriculum will accommodate the demands of a fluctuating 21st-century arts industry.

**Keywords:** arts industry, employability, skills, entrepreneurial skills, new curriculum, Performing Arts (PA), transformation

## INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the transformation of higher education (HE) in South Africa became a fundamental discourse in the National Higher Education Transformation Summit led by the country's Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) was one of the universities that responded to the call for transformation and decided to embrace transformation as a priority. The Faculty of the Arts at TUT proclaimed the importance of curriculum transformation in a changing South African landscape (Ebewo & Sirayi, 2018). Griesel and Parker (2009), Yende (2017) and Leal (2018) agree that the demand for sustained employability calls for curriculum transformation that would contribute to economic growth. There has been a global and national paradigm shift in the Performing Arts (PA) industry in the 21st

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century that requires higher education institutions (HEIs) of the arts to consider curriculum transformation to align their curriculum with the requisites of the changing market (Ebewo & Sirayi, 2018). Some of these paradigm shifts are (i) economic sustainability in the face of dwindling government funding, (ii) producing skilled graduates in decolonisation and (iii) transformation of curricula (Yende, 2017). According to Yende (2017), the paradigm shift in the PA industry has resulted in significant changes, ranging from the decline of funding for the PA to the closure of PA companies.

In the context of music in the PA, Spies (2015) and Leal (2018) indicate that employers in the PA space deem skills such as music administration, music business and marketing as core skills for a changing market. The 21st century requires performers to have a sense of self-readiness, self-directedness, and personal agency in retaining and securing sustainable employment (Spies, 2015; Leal, 2018). Yende (2017) adds that universities have to align the present curriculum with the needs of employers so that graduates are employable. The industry has become competitive with small companies battling in an arena of survival of the fittest (Yende, 2017). Therefore, there is a need for arts institutions of HE to revise their curriculum to suit the needs of employers.

According to Heleta (2016), colonialism had a negative effect on South African institutions of higher learning, and these institutions have to be transformed. For over a century, South African education institutions were forced to embrace the Western system of formal education, which was an integral instrument of social and cultural change (Yende, 2017). According to Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), the education policies of the colonisers in African countries were an effective tool that governed the direction of social change. Decolonisation of the curriculum is imperative in HE to promote homogenous education coupled with African culture, business, and politics (Ebewo & Sirayi, 2018). This paper addresses the skills added in the new curriculum rather than decolonisation and its implications.

TUT held its first Transformation Framework symposium about curriculum transformation in 2017. Curriculum transformation can address many areas of change in HE. However, this article focuses on fundamental skills that were readdressed at the symposium, and the resultant new curriculum offered by TUT.

TUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Lourens van Staden highlights the priority to transform in the Transformation Framework (2017: 1):

We have been offered an opportunity as TUT community to embrace transformation as a university priority. It is something that we must do in deep solidarity with higher education in South Africa and the broader South African community. We must be our own agents of change. Transformation is our responsibility. We face the challenge of developing an institutional identity whilst we are on the road of transformation.

In the context of PA, the goal of curriculum transformation is to ensure that the PA programme has all the skills required by the employers. Yende (2017) agrees that curriculum transformation serves as a fundamental tool for addressing all the key PA skills required by industry. According to Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), the curriculum transformation at TUT's Faculty of the Arts is necessary and will help to ensure that PA graduates from this institution are effective and relevant to the PA sector.

It is useful to foreground in this study that TUT was previously known as Technikon Pretoria and was established in 1900 (Insight of Tshwane University of Technology, 2015). A government initiative merged the former Technikon Northern Gauteng, Technikon North-West, and Technikon Pretoria into the Tshwane University of Technology. No changes or improvements were made to the PA programme to adequately meet the needs of the PA industry (Insight of Tshwane University of Technology, 2015). Due to the curriculum

mismatch with the needs of the industry, graduates experienced some difficulties finding employment due to the insufficient skills to meet the needs of the PA industry (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2016).

It is prudent to highlight that the new curriculum came into operation in 2020. Yende (2017) highlights that the revised curriculum will better provide the industry with performers who are trained as performers and who can do basic business duties, such as administration and marketing. Sodipo (2014) indicates that the new curriculum should equip graduates with the necessary skills required in the PA industry. It was against this background that the author was stimulated to study the significant changes required to improve the relevance of the PA industry. The author posed questions to various sectors of the industry – that is, to students, lecturers, and employees.

Baker and Henson (2010) and Taylor (2016) stress that it is imperative to embrace a curriculum that will change and solve the challenges experienced by graduates in the arts industry. Jansen (2017) and Yende (2017) establish that it is important for South African universities to embrace the philosophy of curriculum transformation. According to Yende (2017), to achieve the transformation goal, the participation of a wide range of individuals is required, namely students, alumni, lecturers, institutional management, advisory boards, employers, and other relevant stakeholders in the PA industry. However, due to the nature of the author's study, this article was limited to TUT students, graduates, lecturers and industry employers. Assembling data based on the experiences of the new curriculum and its result on graduate employability will help universities of PA and the PA industry work together to bridge the unemployment gap (Yende, 2017).

This study refers to dance and musical theatre, music, and vocal art, and focuses on the significant changes that are being ushered in by the new curriculum for PA graduates at TUT. A study conducted by Yende (2017) demonstrated that the curriculum offered by the TUT Department of PA before 2020 was no longer aligned with the requirements of the PA industry. The shortfall experienced in that curriculum was due to the absence of the entrepreneurial skills required by the PA industry (Spies, 2015). The new curriculum is set to address this shortfall by including the entrepreneurial skills also believed to be key PA industry skills.

This paper was driven by performers who experience a consistently high level of unemployment in South Africa. Yende (2017) contends that, due to the paradigm shift, the PA industry has become highly competitive, and performers who are not in line with the required changes taking place in the arts are confronted with a variety of challenges – including unemployment. It is no longer sufficient for PA graduates to have qualifications without additional skills that would make them employable, such as music administration, music business and marketing (Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017; Leal, 2018).

The new curriculum was proposed by the TUT Department of PA in 2007 and is now implemented. It will prepare students with the necessary entrepreneurial, administrative and marketing skills required in the workplace. The acquisition of these skills will ensure that performers flourish in their careers (Yende, 2017). The revised curriculum ensures that the new subjects that provide entrepreneurial skills are compulsory (Yende & Mugovhani, 2018).

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since the end of the South African apartheid regime in 1994, there has been a paradigm shift in the PA industry, both globally and nationally. This shift reveals that performers have to move with trends in the PA industry. The three pillars of skills required in the 21st century are (i) administration, (ii) entrepreneurship, and (iii) marketing (Spies, 2015; Leal, 2018). A study conducted by Yende (2017) reveals that many PA graduates remain unemployed if they do not have the necessary skills required by the industry. Thom

(2016) agrees that artists who lack entrepreneurial and administrative skills usually spend more time looking for jobs.

A preliminary study conducted by Yende (2017) finds that PA graduates at TUT did not have the kinds of skills necessary for the industry resulting in employability challenges. The new curriculum at TUT will positively and successfully expose PA graduates to the range of skills required by the PA industry, and it will improve performers' employability.

Ebewo and Sirayi (2018) and Yende and Mugovhani (2018) highlight that the new curriculum offered by the TUT Department of PA has a wide range of new modules, namely Creative Industries, Business Practice, Community Empowerment, African Performance, among others. The modules are aligned with DHET accreditation. The fundamental purpose of the new curriculum is to equip performers with entrepreneurial and business practice skills (Yende & Mugovhani, 2017; Leal, 2018). The new curriculum's modules have a suitable balance of theoretical and practical knowledge as well as skill. Yende (2017), Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), and Yende and Mugovhani (2018) indicate that it is hoped that the new curriculum adjusted by TUT will help mitigate graduate unemployment by equipping graduates with the necessary skills required and ensure that graduates are relevant to the demands of a changing arts industry in the 21st century. Griesel and Parker (2009) assert that it is essential for HEIs in South Africa to produce skilled graduates who can meet the demands of the marketplace and who are competent within a shrinking labour force worldwide.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses the following questions:

1. How do students, lecturers and arts industry professionals experience the new curriculum adjusted by the TUT Department of PA?
2. How does the new curriculum meet the demand for curriculum transformation and provide for sustainably employable performers?
3. What are the differences between the old curriculum and the new curriculum?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Challenges in curriculum transformation in the Performing Arts*

Considerable research was conducted at the institutions of higher learning to define the challenges in and crucial nature of the process of curriculum transformation in South Africa (Ebewo & Sirayi, 2018; Taylor, 2016; Baker & Henson, 2010). According to Kwok (2003), PA institutions of higher learning are consistently challenged to develop curricula to address the employability of the PA graduates. It is easy to announce curriculum transformation; however, the curricula have to be implemented practically (Adendorff et al., 2002; Letsekha, 2013; Slonimsky, 2016; Idowu, 2017).

Ebewo and Sirayi (2018) define curriculum transformation in the South African context as a method that intends to improve teaching and learning in the existing content with more Africanisation in the curricula, which includes the values of African people and foregrounds African cultural practices. According to Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), the new curriculum possesses strong African subjects such as African dance, African music and creative industry. In the revision of the curriculum, it was necessary to reflect strong African values in South African HEIs, which could solve the problem of unemployment, especially for PA graduates (Mugovhani, 2011; Ebewo & Sirayi, 2018).

In light of the Africanisation of HE curricula, Ebewo and Sirayi (2018) highlight the paradigm shift that addresses the inequalities of the past and the adoption of relevant 21st-century skills. Therefore, it is imperative for researchers and curriculum developers to develop curricula that equip students with professional skills relevant to the world of work and improve their chances of employment success (Yende, 2017).

Curriculum transformation is important worldwide (Zinser, 2003; Sha, 2006; Singh & Singh, 2008). Sha (2006) and Oluwajodu et al. (2015) advise that institutions of HE must align their curricula with the skills demands of the 21st-century labour market.

#### *Opportunities in curriculum transformation*

Crucial curriculum transformation opportunities have recently been presented at institutions of higher learning in South Africa (Du Preez, Simmonds & Chetty, 2017). Bester (2014) points out that academic opportunities for curriculum transformation are more prominent and that the curriculum will better prepare graduates for the workplace. Yende (2017) indicates that curriculum transformation is also crucial for PA graduates as the transformation will allow graduates to be relevant in the 21st century.

There is an accelerating global change in the economic landscape that requires institutions of higher learning globally to update and change their curricula to increase the number of performers with a variety of required skills in the PA industry (Yende, 2017). Graduates who are equipped with such skills will be more productive in the PA (Yende, 2017). The entrepreneurial, business and marketing skills mentioned are deemed crucial for performers to contribute to the industry's paradigm shift (Ebewo & Sirayi, 2018).

Curriculum transformation will improve the South African economy, which has been stagnant for some time and is in jeopardy of collapsing (Yende, 2017). Ongoing curriculum transformation will address the challenges experienced by institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Curriculum transformation is seen as a stepping-stone towards addressing the employability challenges of South African graduates, which affect their potential for success as performers (Yende, 2017; Ebewo & Sirayi, 2018).

#### *Significance of curriculum transformation in PA at TUT*

Curriculum transformation has been revealed to be a significant tool in refurbishing the quality of the skills the PA industry seeks in performers (Crowe, 2006; Yende, 2017; Ebewo & Sirayi, 2018). According to Walmsley (2011), the transformed curriculum could address constant change in the PA industry in South Africa. Therefore, the new curriculum would improve PA graduates' ability to perform in and keep up with the fast-changing PA industry (Walmsley, 2011; Yende, 2017). According to Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), a well-developed curriculum should reflect the key skills that are required in the PA industry. Entrepreneurial, administrative and marketing skills are limited in the previous PA curricula and are embedded in the new curricula at institutions of higher learning in South Africa and globally (Yende, 2017).

According to Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), the current, pressing skills needs are now addressed in the new curriculum offered by TUT and in the PA programme, which now also offers work-integrated learning (WIL) designed to help students work for a few months in the industry to gain practical experience. The transformed TUT PA curriculum is designed to expose its students to key parts of the PA labour market (Yende, 2017).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative research method was used to collect data from a population of PA students, graduates, lecturers and employers in the PA industry. In this study, a non-probability, purposive and snowball sampling method was used (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). Face-to-face interviews (both structured and

non-structured) were conducted with 20 students and graduates from TUT, 10 lecturers from TUT, and three employers in the PA industry. In this study, the researcher used structured and non-structured interviews with the selected participants. The sample interviewed was situated predominantly in two South African provinces, namely Gauteng (Pretoria and Johannesburg) and the Western Cape (Cape Town). These cities were chosen because most PA companies in South Africa are in these three cities. The populations in these cities are assumed to be knowledgeable about the importance of revising the curriculum. In this study, a purposive sampling method was employed based on the awareness of participants of the changing PA industry. Thus, the participants' knowledge provided information imperative to the study.

The findings gathered from the selected participants were analysed and discussed, and recommendations were made. A letter of consent was received from the university to conduct the study and this ensures the quality of this study. All the necessary submissions for ethical clearance were made. Participants were all informed about the nature and purpose of the study, and they participated voluntarily. Signed informed consent was obtained from each participant in the study. The researcher employed thematic coding analysis and inductive coding to protect participants and ensure participants' anonymity. Participants are referred to using alphabetical capital letters according to their order in the raw data. Table 1 reflects the number of participants that took part in this project.

*Table 1:  
Participants in the study*

Level	Number selected	Percentage of population
Students	10	30.3%
Graduates (alumni)	10	30.3%
Lecturers	10	30.3%
Employers of PA industry	3	9.1%
Total number of participants	33	100.0%

### Limitations of the study

The study was limited to students, graduates, and lecturers at TUT, and to PA industry employers. For this reason, the results of the study can neither be generalised to other forms of art, such as visual and fine arts, nor can they be generalised to other countries. The aim of the study was to explore the expected impact of the new curriculum at the TUT Department of PA. It is recommended that the study be replicated on a broader spectrum.

## FINDINGS

The three aims of this study were to explore (i) how students, lecturers and arts industry professionals experience the new curriculum adjusted by the TUT Department of PA; (ii) how the new curriculum meets the demand for curriculum transformation and provides for sustainably employable performers; and (iii) what the differences are between the old curriculum and the new curriculum.

The outcomes of this study were deliberated based on the insights and perceptions of selected participants. The results were compared to related literature to ensure that this study originates new, dependable findings about curriculum transformation. Results and discussions are presented according to the aims stated.

The findings of this study were divided into four categories: (i) students, (ii) graduates, (iii) lecturers and (iv) employers in the PA industry.

*Students' perception of the new curriculum*

The study findings revealed that the majority of students believe that the new curriculum will transform their employability in the industry. The findings established that most of the students were excited about the new curriculum. The students' strong belief demonstrates that the anticipated curriculum has a sufficient and broader spectrum of choices to permit versatility of employability in the industry. The findings show that the students felt that curriculum transformation was required; the findings also established that the students anticipated that the new curriculum would unlock future employment opportunities. The new curriculum will provide skills that employers are looking for in the industry, according to Ebewo and Sirayi (2018) and Yende (2017).

Student A observed:

I believe that the new curriculum will be beneficial to students who will be going into the industry. With this new curriculum, we will not only be performers, but we will have various kinds of valuable skills such as entrepreneurial skills, administrative, and marketing skills crucial for performers.

Student B said:

I am excited that the Department of PA is revising its curriculum, and I am certain that the new curriculum will equip us with the new set of skills that the employers are looking for. These skills include business skills, administrative, writing, and directing.

The students' contributions above reveal the significance of the new curriculum in the employability of future graduates. The new curriculum will offer various options for graduates, making them flexible in the PA industry. According to Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), in this transforming world through digital technology, multidisciplinary skills are viewed as crucial tools to produce graduates that are effective in the arts industry, in contrast to graduates who are specialists in a single discipline.

*Graduates' perception of the new curriculum*

The study further found that many PA graduates who are active in the industry highlighted that the new curriculum will help upcoming performers be employable.

Graduate A said:

Employment is a serious issue for us as graduates because we battle to get employment. The employers are well pleased with the basic skills that we have, such as voice, sight-reading, and acting, but they require more than that. It is hard in the industry of arts if you do not possess these attributes that entice the employers.

Graduate B confirmed:

It is difficult to be a successful performer having only the attributes that are taught by the university, as a singer, extra attributes are needed.

These responses reveal that there was a need for a revision of the curriculum. According to Yende and Mugovhani (2018), the university curriculum had to be revised to solve the unemployment problem by ensuring that graduates are well equipped with the requisite skills, such as entrepreneurial and administrative skills.

### *Lecturers' perspective on the new curriculum*

The following are the abridged findings from lecturers' points of view with regards to the new curriculum. The study findings revealed that many lecturers believe that there has long been an evident gap between the existing curriculum and the employability of graduates, which will now be bridged by the new curriculum. Recent changes, such as the closure of many PA companies, have resulted in increasing competitiveness in the PA industry. Performers require the skill set found in the new curriculum to compete to find jobs in the shrinking PA industry (Yende, 2017). Ebewo and Sirayi (2018) and Yende (2017) affirm that the new TUT curriculum will contribute to the employability of performers.

Lecturer A described the new curriculum as follows:

I really trust that the upcoming curriculum will effect, transform and bring change in the industry of arts for graduates. The new curriculum will provide new perspectives to graduates who will bring transformation in their careers. The integration of a range of various modules will bring visible change.

Lecturer B said:

The new curriculum focuses more on creativity, good work ethic, and enough knowledge that could aid the PA graduates to clinch the few jobs that are available.

Lecturer C highlighted:

The new curriculum is designed in such a way that it places students in a simulated environment in which the students are entirely responsible for developing and managing a PA festival.

Lecturer D postulated:

The added modules such as Creative Industries, Business Practice, Community Empowerment, and African performance are principally pragmatic in the means in which students are required to engage in practical implementation and application of learned content.

These findings indicate that there has been a demand for new approaches to enhance the previous curriculum to dynamically meet industry requirements. Ebewo and Sirayi (2018) establish that the new curriculum would be favourable to students because of its interdisciplinarity, as opposed to the previous curriculum. According to Millar (2016), interdisciplinarity is a vital tool in the curriculum because it brings change and aligns the curriculum with the requirements of the industry.

After extensive research carried out by the Department of PA with an expert of the PA industry, Yende and Mugovhani (2018) agree that the previous curriculum did not meet the needs of employers. Yende (2017) notes that employers confirmed that they are looking for performers or graduates with exceptional and competitive skills beyond the performative skills. Entrepreneurial and administrative skills, among others, are fundamental for prospective employees in the PA industry (Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017). The new curriculum will improve graduates' proficiency when combining theoretical and practical skills in the workplace. The teaching and learning in these subjects also integrate reflective experiential practice.

The interdisciplinarity offered by the TUT Department of PA comprises performative skills with business skills, such as administrative, enterprise and workplace experience. According to Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), the new curriculum creates 'international partnerships for exchange programmes, skills transference, and benchmarking purposes; and community engagement for the service of the catchment community.'



*Employers' perspective on the new curriculum*

The following are the summarised findings from the employers in the arts industry who participated. The findings of the study demonstrated that employers were delighted to hear that TUT is revising the curriculum to benefit the standard of the arts industry. The findings of the study confirmed that employers do appreciate the interdisciplinarity of the new curriculum.

Employer A stated:

There has been a great change in the arts industry all over the world, and this requires new skills from graduates for them to be effective in the industry. I am excited to hear that TUT is working on a new curriculum.

Employer B asserted:

The previous curriculum offered by the TUT Department of PA was limited and did not fully equip students with additional skills that would make them competitive in the industry. In recent years, skills, such as administrative, business enterprises, and workplace experience, are key skills in the PA industry.

The employers' statements above demonstrate that employers trust that the new curriculum will make graduates more employable in the arts industry. The statements above suggest that the new curriculum will drive change in the arts industry.

#### **DATA OBTAINED ACCORDING TO THE SUB-AIMS USING EXISTING LITERATURE**

*Students and lecturers' experience of the changes within the new curriculum at TUT*

According to Yende (2017) and Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), the transformed curriculum at the TUT's Department of PA puts more emphasis on African content in the strong business and creative industry subjects offered. This emphasis on African business and creativity allows students to focus on local industry aspects of marketing, budgeting and finance. Yende and Mugovhani (2018) establish that the new curriculum is structured to give PA students a wider choice of modules to cater for wider employment opportunities. The new modules will serve to ground students' understanding of a wider spectrum of activities within the PA (Yende & Mugovhani, 2018).

According to Yende and Mugovhani (2018) and Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), the previous curriculum was limited and narrow because students were equipped with artistic skills only. However, now the new curriculum includes programmes such as African performance studies, analysis and criticism, writing skills, multidisciplinary professional practice, and creative industries that will prepare students with knowledge through WIL.

*Curriculum transformation to meet the demand for sustainably employable performers*

Since the PA industry is faced with diminishing funding and the closure of many PA companies, curriculum transformation was necessary to ensure that performers can compete by making sure that they are well prepared for the demands of industry and sustainable employment (Yende, 2017; Ebewo & Sirayi, 2018). According to Yende and Mugovhani (2018), the transformed curriculum is designed so that students can network with employers to create future opportunities. The new curriculum manages to meet the PA industry's demands for additional skills by designing a curriculum that allows students to engage with industry experts (Yende & Mugovhani, 2018). Awareness of employers' common perceptions ensured the quest for curriculum transformation to meet social and economic demands.

### *The differences between the old curriculum and the new curriculum*

Yende and Mugovhani (2018) express that the management of TUT, the Faculty of the Arts, and the Department of PA cooperatively embarked on finding possible solutions to the graduate employability conundrum. The quest for curriculum transformation was crucial as the old curriculum could no longer meet the required demands of the PA industry (Yende, 2017; Spies, 2015). According to Yende and Mugovhani (2018), the new curriculum is designed so that PA students will have a broader choice of modules that accommodate wider employment opportunities. Ebewo and Sirayi (2018) highlight modules that integrate reflective, experiential practice in the transformed curriculum. Yende and Mugovhani (2018) note that the new modules ground the understanding of a wider spectrum of PA. According to Yende and Mugovhani (2018) and Ebewo and Sirayi (2018), the new curriculum's modules are mainly practical so that students engage in practical execution and implementation of learned content.

## **ANALYSIS**

This study found that students are excited about the new curriculum that commenced in 2020. Skills such as entrepreneurship, administration and marketing that were missing in the previous curriculum are covered in the new curriculum and will contribute to the sustainable employability of graduates. Interdisciplinarity plays a vital role in transformative education.

Yende (2017) established that the new curriculum would improve students' entrepreneurial and administrative skills and confirmed that TUT PA graduates would be more relevant to the arts industry. Furthermore, the new curriculum will equip students with the necessary skills for the PA industry.

The lecturers' responses show that the new curriculum could improve the industry. The lecturers show that the new curriculum will position students as more independent with the addition of entrepreneurial, administrative, and marketing skills.

According to Ebewo and Sirayi (2018) and Yende and Mugovhani (2018), curriculum transformation for TUT PA graduates is crucial and will be an improvement on the previous curriculum.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the new curriculum will empower graduated performers with balanced skills that will enable them to find employment. It was also noted that the new curriculum will provide sufficient entrepreneurial skills for performers to establish their own businesses confidently. The findings also demonstrate that many of the participants agreed that the PA institutions of HE had been consistently and continuously pressured by the paradigm shift in the industry. As a result, curriculum transformation for PA graduates at TUT was considered a key remedy that would unlock the employability of performers. Furthermore, the teaching strategy for these modules are pragmatic with embodied and experiential opportunities that culminate in continuous assessments in practical assessments.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Curriculum transformation is recognised as an urgent need globally (World Economic Forum, 2020). South African universities recognise and acknowledge that the existing curriculum had to be revised to improve the challenge of unemployment experienced by graduates. Based on the findings and the analyses of this study, the TUT Department of PA's new curriculum was necessary to provide students with interdisciplinary knowledge about business, management, and entrepreneurial skills, as well as WIL. The TUT Department of PA will present a variety of subjects so that students can integrate conceptual and practical design skills across the full spectrum of their learning careers.

The study recognised that PA graduates are often unsuccessful when finding employment because the industry has become very competitive and full-time jobs are scarce. Employment-seeking requires

perseverance, a good work ethic and knowledge from graduates to clinch the few jobs available. The study points out that the new curriculum was necessary as it brings a new set of skills that increasingly makes PA graduates competent in the industry. The new curriculum prepares students for the labour market and for being business-minded. The graduates from the TUT Department of PA will benefit from the new curriculum by making students relevant to the PA industry and to other industries where the arts are valued.

The new curriculum has been designed and structured to contribute significantly to supplementing skills. The new curriculum will accommodate improved employment in the fluctuating 21st-century arts industry.

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