



Perceptions of performing arts graduates, lecturers, and employers on the role of internship programmes in enhancing employability in South Africa

Sakhiseni Joseph Yende

Department of Language Education, Arts & Culture, College of Education, University of South Africa, Republic of South Africa

Corresponding author: yendesj@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

Framed within Human Capital Theory, this article explores the role of internships in improving the employability of performing arts graduates in South Africa. Although collaboration between the performing arts industry and higher education institutions is crucial for addressing the issue of graduate unemployment, there has been limited collaboration between these two entities. This lack of engagement results in a significant disconnect between the skills taught in academic settings and the skills demanded by the industry. Like fields of higher education, the South African performing arts sector faces a significant challenge in graduate unemployment, which can be largely attributed to the lack of collaboration between universities, the industry, and government. This article explores the perceptions of performing arts graduates, lecturers, and employers on the role of internship programmes in enhancing employability in South Africa. A qualitative research approach was employed, using purposive sampling to select ten performing arts graduates, five employers, and five lecturers with substantial knowledge of the South African performing arts industry and its challenges. A review of existing scholarly literature was also conducted to complement the findings from interviews. The study finds that internships provide essential practical experience, which is critical for career development and improving the employability of graduates. It further reveals that the absence of strong collaboration between universities, the performing arts industry, and government limits the opportunities for graduates. The article concludes by emphasising the need for partnerships that foster knowledge and skill sharing, joint projects, and enhanced funding for the performing arts sector. Such collaborations can benefit both educational institutions and the industry by creating a more integrated approach to graduate development.

Keywords: Career development, collaboration, graduates' internship, performing arts industry, unemployment.

Introduction

The primary goal of South African higher education, particularly within Performing Arts schools, is to prepare students for successful careers and ensure their employability upon graduation. These institutions focus on equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills required to navigate the real world and succeed in their respective fields (Ng, Wut & Chan, 2022; Pitan & Muller, 2020; Yende, 2021). In their study, Yende and Mugovhani (2021) state that in South Africa, the following institutions cater for performing arts disciplines: the University of Cape Town's College of Music, the University of

KwaZulu-Natal's Department of Music, the University of South Africa's Music Examinations Directorate, the University of Northwest's Potchefstroom Campus, the University of Pretoria's Musaion, and TUT's VA section, to name a few. These Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are instrumental in training students for careers in the performing arts, providing them with the necessary knowledge and technical skills to succeed in the industry. However, the increasing unemployment rate in South Africa raises a critical question: where are these performing arts graduates absorbed in the workforce, considering the limited job opportunities available?

Despite receiving quality education and acquiring specialised skills, many performing arts graduates continue to face difficulty in securing employment post-graduation. This persistent challenge has been attributed to several factors, including a lack of industry experience, insufficient internships, and an oversaturated job market. The economic strain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this issue, leaving many graduates without the opportunity to apply their skills in the professional realm (Braňka, 2016; Mseleku, 2022; Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). As a result, there remains a significant gap between the education and training provided by HEIs and the actual employability of performing arts graduates in South Africa.

A key factor contributing to the struggles of performing arts graduates is the lack of effective internships that bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements. Studies show that internships are essential for enhancing graduate employability, as they provide invaluable practical experience and exposure to the professional world (Behluli, Qerimi, Pula & Shabani, 2022; Stewart, Owens, Hewitt & Nikoloudakis, 2018; Yende, 2017). Without such exposure, many graduates are left ill-prepared to meet the demands of a competitive job market (Yende, 2017). In particular, the performing arts industry has seen an increase in unemployment rates among graduates due to insufficient internship opportunities and a lack of industry collaboration (Chinyamurindi & Harry, 2020; Yende, 2021).

Research by Mseleku (2022) underscores the critical role of internships in the professional development of graduates. Internships not only provide technical skills but also help graduates develop soft skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication—competencies that are vital for success in the performing arts industry (Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). Despite these benefits, the exposure of performing arts graduates to the evolving demands of the industry remains insufficient, with many graduates struggling to adapt to the ever-changing nature of the sector (Lebler & Weston, 2015; Yende, 2021).

The challenges faced by performing arts graduates have been further exacerbated by the

economic downturn and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis has highlighted the importance of preparing graduates not only in performance skills but also in soft skills that are crucial for thriving in a digital and collaborative environment (Walters, 2023; Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). The pandemic has underscored the need for performing arts graduates to possess strong business acumen, digital literacy, and the ability to collaborate across various sectors, including virtual platforms for performances, which became essential during the pandemic.

In response to these issues, this study seeks to explore how internships can play a pivotal role in improving the employability of performing arts graduates in South Africa. Building on the work of Yende and Mugovhani (2021), who highlighted the concerns expressed by employers regarding the lack of practical, industry-specific skills among recent graduates, this research aims to investigate the role of internships in equipping performing arts graduates with the competencies necessary for success in the workforce. Despite the growing body of literature on the importance of internships for graduate employability (Anjum, 2020; Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015), there remains a research gap regarding the specific impact of internships on the employability of performing arts graduates in South Africa.

One of the most pressing issues in the South African performing arts sector is the rising unemployment rates among graduates. Before the pandemic, many performing arts graduates found themselves working in unrelated fields just to make ends meet, as indicated by Yende and Mugovhani (2021, p. 116) who mentioned a dire crisis scenario when stating that:

“Performing art graduates were working in odd places rather than those they are qualified for, just to make ends meet. Many of them were found working in retail stores or supermarkets as cashiers or in restaurants as waitrons”.

This situation highlights the need for universities to incorporate industry-relevant internship programs into their curricula to better align graduate skills with labour market demands. This study, therefore, aims to assess the potential of internship programs in enhancing the

employability of performing arts graduates in South Africa, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on the role of higher education in preparing students for a competitive and ever-evolving job market.

Problem statement

Perhaps, it is essential to foreground this section by highlighting that In South Africa, performing arts graduates face significant challenges in securing employment, with high unemployment rates exacerbated by the lack of structured internship programs. This issue is primarily rooted in the insufficient collaboration between universities, the performing arts industry, and government bodies. Despite acquiring theoretical knowledge and technical skills during their studies, graduates struggle to gain the practical experience and industry exposure necessary for career development (Mseleku, 2022; Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). The absence of well-organised internship opportunities limits graduates' ability to transition from academic environments into professional settings. As a result, many performing arts graduates remain underemployed or work in fields unrelated to their qualifications. This disconnect between education and industry needs further restricts their prospects in a highly competitive and evolving job market (Yende, 2021). The economic downturn, compounded by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, has worsened the situation, further limiting job opportunities in the performing arts sector (Yende, 2021). While there is growing recognition of the need for effective internship programs, empirical research on their actual impact on graduate employability in the performing arts is limited. This study seeks to investigate how internships can be optimised to enhance the employability of performing arts graduates in South Africa, focusing on both technical and soft skills development necessary to thrive in a competitive and ever-changing industry.

Research questions

In this study, the researcher developed specific primary research questions that seek answers and give more clarity on the ongoing crisis:

- a) What is the role of internships for Performing Art graduates?
- b) What are the major factors contributing to universities in driving successful internship employability of graduates?
- c) What are the major internship challenges faced by Performing Art graduates in South Africa?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this article is grounded in Human Capital Theory to understand the role of internships and industry collaboration in improving the employability of performing arts graduates in South Africa. Several scholars such as (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) agree that in the eighteenth century, Adam Smith (1973) launched a development in human aptitude that is crucial to production, and Schultz (1961), published in the American Economic Review, coined the term "human capital investment." Human capital became extensively utilised after Becker won the Nobel awards, and "human capital theory" argued that different levels of education and training contribute to varying levels of income and salaries, with the more knowledge, skill, and ability, the more likely to find a better job (Blair, 2012). Becker (1964) defines human capital as a physical means of production. Human Capital Theory (hereafter, HCT) emphasises the role of education, training, and skills acquisition in enhancing individuals' productivity and economic value (Fleischhauer, 2007; Sweetland, 1996; Marimuthu, Arokiasamy & Ismail, 2009). HCT posits that investments in human capital, such as internships and other forms of professional development, enable individuals to gain the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to improve their employability and contribute to economic growth.

This theory was adopted in this article as it is pivotal in understanding the role of internships in equipping performing arts graduates with the competencies required to navigate the labour market. Internships are conceptualised within the HCT framework as a strategic investment in human capital, providing graduates with practical exposure and skill-building opportunities that bridge the gap between academic learning and industry demands. The study leverages HCT to

interpret findings related to the impact of structured internship programs on graduates' readiness for employment in the performing arts sector. It is evident that applying HCT, the research highlights the interconnectedness of education, training, and workforce participation, asserting that work experience programs, such as internships, are critical in converting academic knowledge into actionable skills. This theoretical approach underpins the study's analysis, demonstrating how these programs contribute to the broader discourse on employability and economic development for performing arts graduates in South Africa.

Methods

This article employed a qualitative research methodology, drawing data from in-depth interviews (IDIs) to explore the importance of improving the employability of Performing Arts graduates through internships in South Africa. Ames, Glenton, and Lewin (2019) define in-depth interviewing as an approach to qualitative study that entails conducting lengthy individual interviews with a small number of respondents to learn about their viewpoints on a specific idea, program, or situation. This view was supported by Johnson and Rowlands (2012) who affirm that in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intense individual interviews with a small number of respondents to investigate their perspectives on a certain idea, program, or situation. They are unsuitable for those who cannot stop talking about themselves.

In this article, a case study research design was utilised to provide a detailed understanding and heightened awareness of the critical role that internships play in this context. A qualitative case study is a research methodology that aids in the analysis of a phenomenon within a specific context using diverse data sources, and it does so via a range of lenses to disclose multiple aspects of the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A case study investigates a real-time phenomenon within its natural setting, with the understanding that context makes a difference (Rashid et al., 2019).

In this article, a non-probability sampling approach, specifically purposive or selective sampling, to identify participants who could provide relevant and insightful data. The purposive sampling approach involves selecting samples based only on the researcher's knowledge and credibility. In other words, researchers select only those who they believe are fit to engage in the research project. The sample comprised ten Performing Arts graduates, five employers, and five lecturers, all with significant knowledge of the South African performing arts industry. Purposive sampling, as suggested by Ames, Glenton, and Lewin (2019), is a common method in qualitative research, allowing the selection of participants with substantial expertise or experience regarding the research subject. Gauteng province was chosen as the geographic focus due to its strong support for the performing arts, its numerous theatres, and the accessibility and convenience it offered for both the researcher and the participants.

Data collection involved unstructured IDIs with open-ended questions, allowing participants to share their perceptions and experiences regarding internships in the performing arts. Recruitment was conducted through meetings where participants were informed of the study's purpose and ethical considerations, such as anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. These interviews were recorded with audio devices, and notes were taken to ensure comprehensive data capture.

The data analysis process was guided by thematic analysis, following the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): (a) familiarisation with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the final report. This method allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions, leading to the identification of prominent features, which were grouped into coherent themes. The themes were cross-checked to ensure interpretive accuracy and reliability. The use of thematic analysis provided a robust framework for deriving insights, allowing the study to uncover the nuanced ways in which internships influence the employability of Performing Arts graduates in South Africa.

Ethical Clearance

Proper ethical clearance procedure was followed and permission to conduct the study was granted by the University. As highlighted earlier, participants in the study were informed about the scope and aim of the study. Participants voluntarily agreed to participate in this study.

Limitations

The study was limited due to the timeframe to one South African province which is Gauteng. Limiting the study to this province helped the researcher to have a manageable data collection process. The data collected from the selected Performing Art graduates, employers, and lecturers, were significant in this study. The study was limited to Performing Art graduates, employers, and lecturers based in Gauteng province. However, these limitations did not jeopardise the results of this study.

Results

It is important to highlight the overall findings of this study. The study on the perceptions of performing arts graduates, lecturers, and employers in South Africa highlights a strong consensus on the importance of internships for enhancing employability in the competitive performing arts industry. Graduates emphasise that internships provide essential real-world experience and the opportunity to acquire in-demand digital skills, while also offering networking opportunities crucial for career advancement. Lecturers agree that internships bridge the gap between academic learning and industry demands, helping students gain professional skills and career clarity. Employers acknowledge the value of internships for identifying future talent but express concerns about the costs and time required for training interns. The study contributes new insights by exploring the role of internships in addressing the digital transformation of the industry and highlighting the need for sustainable internship models that benefit both graduates and employers. The findings underscore the critical role of internships in preparing graduates for success in the evolving performing arts sector. The findings were separated into three important categories, namely: Performing Arts graduates' perceptions;

Performing Arts lecturers' perception and employer's perception.

Performing Arts graduates' perception

What are the perceptions of Performing Art graduates about internship programmes?

The participants report that internships for their career is essential, and internships can increase their employability of Performing Art industry. Participants point out that since the performing arts industry has become competitive with limited job opportunities, completing internships can assist them to gain the necessary and competitive skills that are in demand in the job market and increase their chances of success in their chosen career. Participant A states:

I believe that we are living in a world where internships are necessary as for us musicians to increase employability in the industry. Internships can help us to develop the required and expected skills in the industry.

Participant B affirms that:

The transformation that has taken place in the recent year has forced the performing arts industry to be highly competitive with high digital skills. This has reduced employability of performing arts graduates in the industry. I believe that completing internships can assist us to gain the necessary and competitive digital skills that are in demand in the job market and increase chances of success in our chosen career.

Participant C also points out that:

I believe that internships are crucial for us as performing arts graduates as internships provide us with the opportunity to gain practical work experience, develop professional skills, and build a network of industry contacts.

Participant D admits that:

I believe that internships can assist us to gain experience and be easily recognised in the performing arts industry.

Participant E confirms that:

Internships are important for us to develop a strong network. I also believe that by working in a real-world setting, interns can apply

the theoretical knowledge and practical skills they have learned in the classroom to real-life scenarios, allowing them to develop a deeper understanding of their field.

The graduates' contributions above reveal the significance of internships in their career. This is also highlighted by Daniel and Daniel (2013) who state that internships are important for graduates, including those in the performing arts industry. Internships provide performing arts graduates with valuable work experience, professional skills development, and networking opportunities that can help them succeed in their career (Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). There is a necessity for performing arts universities to provide their graduates with internships through collaboration with the industry. Collaboration between universities and performing arts industry can be advantageous for both parties because it gives performing arts graduates access to smart and driven graduates while also allowing business partners to enhance their talent and abilities (Yende & Haskins, 2023).

Performing Arts lecturers' perception

What are the perceptions of Performing Art lecturers about internship programmes?

The participants expressed their perceptions concerning the importance of internship programmes for performing arts graduates. Most of the participants point out that internships are now necessary for increasing employability of performing arts graduates in the industry. All participants added that it is essential to equip graduates with the skills that are in demand in the performing arts industry. Performing Arts lecturer, A states that:

Internship programmes for performing arts graduates are important as internships provide students with valuable work experience, professional skills development, and networking opportunities that can help them stand out in a competitive job market.

Participant B reveals that:

Personally, I believe internships can help performing arts graduates define their own personal objectives. Performing Arts graduates have the chance to obtain real-world experience in

their industry through internships, which can help them identify their professional strengths and limitations and more clearly define their career aspirations.

Participant C points out that:

Internships are now essential to improving graduates' employability in the performing arts sector. Employers seek applicants with both a good academic background and relevant professional experience in today's competitive employment market. Graduates in the performing arts can get useful experience in their sector, hone important abilities, and show their dedication to their chosen vocation by doing internships.

Others in the discussion concur that internships give graduates in the performing arts actual experience in their industry. One of the most important types of work-integrated learning is internships, which give graduates of performing arts programs the chance to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the classroom in practical settings (Govender & Wait, 2017). These findings from the participants indicate that there is a demand for equipping graduates with the skills that are in demand in the performing arts industry. As highlighted earlier by Yende (2021) internships for graduates in the performing arts can boost vocational training by offering real-world experience, partnerships with industry, curriculum improvement, improved graduate results, and enhanced reputation. Institutions can better prepare graduates for the demands of the industry and guarantee that they are competitive in the job market by adding internships into their curriculum.

Employer's perception

What are the perceptions of Performing Art employers about internship programmes?

The employers in the performing arts business came to the following conclusions, which are summarised below. Employers perceive internships as a vital programme that gives new graduates and students of performing arts the chance to obtain real-world experience and develop their skills. Participants draw attention to the fact that internships give students the opportunity to learn about the field, develop

professional contacts, and experience various facets of the performing arts. Participant A states that:

Even though internship programmes are viewed as positive for the employability of performing arts graduates, we as performing arts companies concerned about the cost and time required to train interns.

Participant B emphasised that:

I believe that as graduates and performing arts companies, we both gain from internships, thus internship programmes are crucial. As performing arts companies, we have liberty and access to a group of passionate, motivated interns that can help with a range of jobs and projects.

Participant C point out that:

Internships provide a way for employers to identify talented individuals who may be a good fit for future employment opportunities, especially in this digital era.

Based on the above responses, employers perceive internship programmes essential for the growth and sustainability of the industry. However, employers also point out their concerns about the cost and time required to train interns. This was substantiated by Yende and Mugovhani (2021) who found out that internships often require an allocation of resources for training, supervision, and potentially stipends or compensation. Employers might worry about the financial burden of investing in interns, especially if the organisation has limited funding.

Major agreements, disagreements and new insight from the findings

The perceptions of performing arts graduates, lecturers, and employers consistently emphasise the vital role of internships in improving employability within the highly competitive performing arts industry. Graduates overwhelmingly agree that internships provide invaluable real-world experience, essential skills development, and networking opportunities that are crucial for career advancement, especially in the context of the increasingly digital landscape of the arts (Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). Lecturers

also support this view, noting that internships help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical industry requirements. They stress that internships are key for helping students clarify their career goals and gain insight into their strengths and weaknesses (Govender & Wait, 2017). From the employers' perspective, internships are regarded as an important means of identifying potential talent and gaining access to passionate and motivated individuals who can contribute to projects. However, employers also raise concerns regarding the financial and time investments needed for training and supervising interns (Yende & Haskins, 2023).

This introduces a new insight into the findings, highlighting the dual role of internships: they are not only an essential tool for enhancing the employability of graduates but also present a financial burden for employers. This emphasises the need for more sustainable and mutually beneficial internship models that support both the professional development of graduates and the operational capacity of organisations. A balanced approach to internships is necessary to ensure that all parties involved gain the maximum benefit while addressing the resource challenges faced by employers in the performing arts sector.

Data acquired according to the developed aims using existing literature

In this section, the researcher used existing literature to answer the sub-questions developed earlier in this study.

What is the role of internships for Performing Art graduates?

Various scholars point out that the career development of graduates in performing arts is strongly influenced by internships (Anjum, 2020; Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015; Ho, Le, Nguyen, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022; Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). Internships give performing arts graduates the chance to investigate various career options within the performing arts sector, assisting them in determining their strengths and interests and making wise career decisions. A study conducted by Anjum (2020) internships give recent graduates in performing arts the chance to get practical experience in their industry. By working in a real-world situation, individuals can apply the

theoretical information and practical skills they have learned in the classroom to real-life scenarios, helping them to build a deeper grasp of their profession (Anjum, 2020; Bennett, 2009; He et. al, 2022).

This was substantiated by Brown (2007) who states that internships allow Performing Art graduates to develop a range of professional skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. These skills are highly valued by employers in the performing arts industry and can help graduates stand out in a competitive job market. Internships provide Performing Art graduates with the opportunity to build professional relationships with industry professionals (Anjum, 2020; Bennett, 2009; Garnett, 2014). These connections can be valuable when it comes to finding job opportunities, as many jobs in the performing arts industry are filled through word-of-mouth referrals. In conclusion, internships can play a crucial role in the career development of Performing Art graduates. They provide valuable practical experience, professional skills development, and networking opportunities that can help graduates succeed in the competitive field of performing arts.

What are the major factors contributing of universities in driving successful internship employability of graduates?

Various scholars point out that there are several key factors that universities can contribute to driving successful internship employability of performing arts graduates (Bennett, 2009; Brown, 2007; Yende, 2017). Accordingly, it is crucial to highlight that universities can make a significant contribution in driving successful graduates' employability through internship programmes (Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). This was substantiated by Anjum (2020) who affirm that universities play a critical role in preparing students for the workforce and improving their prospects of finding employment by actively engaging with companies, incorporating internships into the curriculum, and offering complete support. Universities can collaborate with leading businesses in their fields to assist students in landing internships there (Cheng, Adekola, Albia & Cai, 2022). These collaborations may offer students useful contacts in the industry

and networking possibilities (Yende & Haskins, 2023). Evidently, universities can integrate internships with coursework to help students apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world situations. This could enhance the students' learning experience and make them more attractive to potential employers. Yende and Mugovhani (2021) point out that universities can play an essential role on the graduates' employability through extensive internships, establishing industry partnerships and offering career services. These elements can assist students in acquiring the abilities and practical knowledge required for success in their chosen fields.

What are the major internship challenges faced by Performing Art graduates in South Africa?

It is prudent to foreground this section by stating that previous studies such as Yende and Mugovhani (2021) point out that South African performing Art graduates have been battling to secure internships in their field due to various issues. These issues include limited performing arts companies that provide internships and limited funding (Walters, 2023; Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). Evidently, limited internship opportunities in the performing arts industry in South Africa has exacerbated the unemployment. This can be attributed to that many performing arts companies in South Africa do not receive sufficient funding to provide paid internships to graduates. Furthermore, the performing arts industry in South Africa is highly competitive, and there may be many graduates competing for a limited number of internships and employment. This has made it challenging for performing art graduates to secure internships that align with their career goals (Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). It is evident that performing art graduates in South Africa are experiencing challenges when it comes to securing internships due to limited opportunities, limited funding, and competition which is caused by the lack of collaboration between the universities and industry.

Contribution of this article

The contribution of this article lies in its comprehensive exploration of the perceptions of performing arts graduates, lecturers, and

employers regarding the role of internships in enhancing employability within the industry. It affirms existing literature on the importance of internships in providing real-world experience, skill development, and networking opportunities for graduates, while also introducing new insights into the practical challenges faced by employers. It is evident that highlighting the financial and time-related concerns employers have regarding the training of interns, the article calls for the development of sustainable internship models that balance the needs of both graduates and employers. Additionally, it expands the conversation by addressing the impact of the digital transformation in the performing arts industry and its influence on the skills required by graduates. The findings underscore the interconnectedness of internships, career development, and industry sustainability, offering a nuanced perspective that could inform future policies, academic curricula, and internship programme designs in the performing arts sector.

Discussion

This article argued that internship programmes are valuable and beneficial learning opportunities for performing art graduates to build their careers in the industry. It has also highlighted that the internships offer practical experience that enables graduates to put their learned skills to use in real-world situations, learn useful skills, and obtain a greater understanding of the industry. This article has shown that internships are frequently perceived to engage with people in the performing arts industry and develop professional networks. Performing art graduates are aware of the beneficial networking opportunities that internships can offer, enabling them to connect with mentors, industry professionals, and prospective employers.

The research participants in this article describe internships to further develop and refine their skills in a professional context. Consistent with previous research Yende and Mugovhani (2021) the findings of this article revealed that performing art graduates understand that internships can enhance their employability by providing practical experience, improving their technique, and preparing them for future career opportunities. Evidently, performing art graduates'

success in the industry relies fundamentally on the internships in the industry. The findings of this article show that there is a necessity for strong collaboration between the universities and the performing arts industry to improve graduates' knowledge and skills. This finding is in line with the human capital theory that emphasises that people gain knowledge, skills, and abilities over time that increase their productivity and economic value (Fleischhauer, 2007; Sweetland, 1996; Marimuthu, Arokiasamy & Ismail, 2009). The findings of this article demonstrate internships are essential for performing art graduates to gain practical experience and for their career development.

Again, the findings of the current study show that performing art graduates are battling to find employment because there is no strong collaboration between the universities, performing arts industry and government. This finding corroborates with the results of Yende (2021) who found that there is a necessity for performing arts universities to provide their graduates with internships through collaboration with the industry. The current study has established that universities and performing arts industry can create strong collaboration that can improve graduates' employability. This finding is in correspondence with the findings of previous studies Yende (2021) that universities should also strive to have compulsory internship programmes for performing art graduates. The results of this article reveal that collaboration with various stakeholders can improve performing art graduates' employability.

Conclusion

This article was set to discuss the importance of improving Performing Art graduates' employability through internship in South Africa. This article recognised that internship programmes for performing art graduates are essential and beneficial to new graduates. The study also pointed out that universities, performing arts industry and government should work together to improve graduates' employability through internships.

Based on these findings and reflecting on the article, the following recommendations are

made: Firstly, universities should develop a stronger relationship with the industry to ensure that performing art graduates are easily absorbed for internship programmes in the industry. This will promote effective collaboration in the industry. Secondly, the performing arts industry can benefit from the combined knowledge, resources, and perspectives of universities, the performing arts industry, and the government through collaboration. Through this partnership, innovation is encouraged, talent development is supported, economic growth is stimulated, policy decisions are influenced, and the sector's social and cultural impact is increased. The article concludes by stating that partnerships can encourage collaboration between universities, the performing arts industry, and the government, facilitating knowledge and skills sharing, research partnerships, joint projects, and enhancing funding for performing arts companies. Innovating and fostering reciprocal progress, this synergy benefits both sides by bridging the gap between universities and the real-world industry.

Using a framework of analysis that was largely informed by the tenant of the human capital theory that affirms that universities can establish partnerships with performing arts companies, theatres, production houses, and other industry stakeholders. This could involve internships, apprenticeships, and collaborative projects where students work on real-world projects, gaining hands-on experience and industry exposure. By so doing, the article has argued and revealed that there is significant potential for collaboration between universities and the performing arts industry to enhance graduates' employability using the principles of human capital theory. In this article, human capital theory suggests that investing in education and skill development can lead to improved productivity, higher earning potential, and better career opportunities for individuals. This article's conclusion acknowledges that partnerships can encourage collaboration between universities, the performing arts industry, and the government, facilitating knowledge and skills sharing, research partnerships, joint projects, and enhancing funding for performing arts companies. Innovating and fostering reciprocal progress, this synergy benefits

both sides by bridging the gap between universities and the real-world industry.

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Declaration of interest statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

ORCID

Yende SJ: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7649-2799>

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