Jeffrey Onganga[1]

Email : Jeffreyonganga@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3906-0540

Rifqah Abrahams[1]

Email : makwambenib@cput.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8426-1667

Dr Blessing Makwambeni[1]

Email : makwambenib@cput.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0188-260X

[1]*Public Relations Management Department, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa*

THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY PREPAREDNESS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS FOR THE PUBLIC RELATIONS INDUSTRY

ABSTRACT

Public relations practitioners (PRPs) operate in a globalised and multicultural environment and have the responsibility to engage with diverse audiences. As such, cultural diversity knowledge has become a crucial component of success in the public relations (PR) industry. PRPs should typically understand various cultures and the implications of cultural differences on industry practice. However, what is not clear is the extent to which tertiary institutions equip PR students with cultural diversity knowledge to meet industry needs and help practitioners thrive in the workplace. This article explores to what extent PR students are equipped with cultural diversity knowledge. The research examined the structure of the PR programme at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) to assess the level of cultural diversity. This was achieved through face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with students and lecturers as well as a review of the curriculum. The findings reveal that PR students at the CPUT have significant theoretical knowledge of PR systems and cultural diversity. However, they lack the practical know-how to apply this in the professional environment.

Keywords: public relations; public relations training; cultural diversity knowledge; cultural diversity; Cape Peninsula University of Technology

INTRODUCTION

Public relations practitioners (PRPs) work with people from diverse cultures on a daily basis as they engage with various stakeholders on behalf of their organisation and clients. According to the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA 2017: 1), "Public relations is the management of communication (being the representative of dissemination of information), of perception and strategic relationships *(building and connecting with people)* between an organization's internal and external stakeholders."

In addition to South Africa's own multicultural environment, multicultural interactions are the norm on the global stage.

UNESCO defines globalisation as "the ongoing process that is linking people, neighbourhoods, cities, regions and countries much more closely together than they have ever been before". Globalization has created new challenges and opportunities for the PR profession (Sriramesh 2009: 9). PRPs are called upon to deliver more effective messages; promote deeper understanding between an organisation and its publics; improve corporate reputation; and expand the market share in diversity segments of stakeholder publics (Ravazzani 2016: 4).

Companies that are regarded as culturally diverse have a better reputation and correspondingly favourable public relations. As such, cultural diversity knowledge has become central to success in the PR industry. However, PR professionals rarely receive diversity education in preparation for entering the PR field, even though such education is available. This competence has not been the focus of the PR learning process and there is no emphasis on its importance (Toth 2009). In an effort to explore this matter, this article reports on an examination of the extent to which PR students of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) receive cultural diversity training.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The new role of public relations

The broad domain of PR includes the proper development of communication and positive interaction with multiple groups of internal and external stakeholders of an organisation (Ferguson 2018: 178). Moreover, PRPs operate either as advisors (for individual clients) or as technicians for higher managerial levels in organisations, with the responsibility of developing and disseminating messages and information efficiently through various channels.

Wilcox and Cameron (2009: 5) point out that PRPs play a crucial role in the development and maintenance of bilateral communication channels; thereby, facilitating mutual understanding, cooperation and acceptance between organisations and stakeholders in different operational activities.

The importance of leveraging relationships is central to the work of PRPs as this reaps benefits for organisations. Heath (2006: 99) suggests that robust relationships are an attribute of high-performing companies, especially in the highly dynamic commercial environment. The PR teams of organisations have to adhere to a given strategic mandate to develop long-term and symbiotic relationships between different organisational participants.

Cultural diversity

Demographic changes over the last 20 years have created increased racial and ethnic diversity in the global labour force. Global Demographics (2019) indicates that about 60% of global inhabitants are Asian; around 14% are African; while 11% are European; and only 5% are North American.

The estimated population of South Africa stands at 58.78 million, according to the 2019 mid-year population estimates (MYPE). The population mix shows various cultural traits, languages, as well as religious inclinations and practices. The black African population is in the majority (47.4 million) and constitutes approximately 81% of the total South African population. The white population is estimated at 4.7 million, the Coloured population at 5.2 million, and the Indian/Asian population at 1.5 million. Just over 51% (30 million) of the population is female (StatsSA 2019: 8).

Cultural diversity is noticeable at every company level. Cultural differences appear in every country and part of the world, and this has the potential to affect the economy or political stability of a given nation. However, cultural diversity is also present in everyday situations. All the cultural differences should be incorporated and managed to take advantage of this configuration. In an attempt to contextualise cultural diversity, Schachner *et al.* (2016: 1191) state that cultural definitions emphasise demographic traits (both primary and secondary). These authors (ibid.) also focus on the origins of the differences in the demographics, and the culmination from individual to group attributes.

In addition to cultural definitions of diversity, there are some organisational approaches to defining the concept. Many global organisations like McKinsey define cultural diversity as the process of ensuring the inclusion of a larger percentage of women and ethnic minorities. These definitions emphasise demographic traits and offer a more streamlined approach to ensuring a high degree of diversity. Some definitions attempt to analyse cultural differences and their role in power distances, especially in the domains of functions and expectations in the workplace, perceptions, and the styles of individuals. These insights into cultural diversity are broad and do not provide a clear indication of how this diversity plays out in the workplace with a specific focus on the PR industry and its aspiring professionals.

To ensure further clarity on cultural diversity, the University of Michigan (2013) sought to delineate the concept of culture. The institution concluded that culture is how people relate to their physical and social environment, and how they express these relationships and stereotypes, as well judgements about an individual based on that "person's membership of particular classifications". While this definition provides more details on the key terms, it does not place cultural diversity in the context of the workplace.

There is considerable debate on the benefits of a culturally diverse employee base for an organisation. The proponents in favour of maintaining culturally diverse workforces argue that it contributes to talent pools and the development of robust perspectives and insights. It enables the organisation to establish a culture of efficiency and problem solving. However, multicultural teams could experience increased conflict because of different belief and value systems. These issues could lead to a loss of productivity. PRPs should learn strategies to leverage the benefits of multiculturalism and address the drawbacks and cultural conflicts. It would help them to develop narratives that could effectively communicate the positive aspects of an organisation when it comes

to managing cultural diversity. An awareness of these benefits and challenges would also aid them in determining the communication needs of a culturally diverse audience.

Cultural diversity knowledge

The available literature at best offers loose indications of what cultural diversity knowledge entails. A 2009 UNESCO report titled *Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue* states that creativity is a critical element of cultural diversity knowledge. According to the report, in cross-border communication, the presence of diversities of culture can be managed by strengthening the roots of the cultures, for which creative and adaptive responses to the dynamic environment are needed.

People who have cultural diversity knowledge tend to work in synergy and value different viewpoints, as they understand that this increases the chance for positive opportunities. The more you interact with other employees, the more knowledge you gain, allowing for innovation and personal growth. The notion of cultural competence refers to the practical use of social and interpersonal skills and insights. An individual who appreciates cultural differences and uses it to his/her advantage or that of the group can be viewed as having cultural diversity competence. Bennett (2014: 45) believes that the ability to adapt experiences and ideas to fit what each customer needs, as opposed to just trying the one-size-fits-all approach, is a sign of cultural diversity knowledge. He (ibid.) emphasises that the goal for companies is to tap into the knowledge and ideas generated by a diverse workplace. This provides the organisation with more ideas, which ultimately leads to better decisions.

There are many ways to prepare PR students or employees for cultural diversity in the workplace. Danso (2018: 410) suggests that the acknowledgement of differences is one of the best ways to promote cultural diversity successfully. However, according to Lozano and Escrich (2017: 679-696), offering training related to implicit bias is most useful to prepare students or employees for cultural diversity. Mentoring individuals is also a great approach to establishing a helpful link with other groups, thereby contributing to a diverse workforce. Mentoring also helps to overcome interaction barriers. According to Danso (2018: 410), encouraging personal evaluation can also be as an effective way to minimise interaction constraints. This approach can help prepare students and employees for the challenges of a culturally diverse workplace. Therefore, continuous learning can motivate employees to prepare for cultural diversity, as well as promote a culturally diverse workplace.

TABLE 1:   INDICATORS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE

Indicators of cultural diversity knowledge
Creativity: Coming up with original, innovative ideas
Teamwork: Ability to collaborate with diverse individuals to achieve shared values and goals

Indicators of cultural diversity knowledge
Cultural self-awareness: Ethnic identification ability
Flexibility: Adaptive capacity to cope with global changes
Respect: Respect for differences
Empathy: Development of compassion with different perspectives and cultures
Critical thinking: Ability to use deductive and inductive forms of reasoning
Language development: Ability to write or read in different languages

These indicators are crucial for the effective management of cultural diversity. Pinto (2018) states that intercultural skills, like those mentioned above, should be part of training curricula. He (ibid.) also recommends training for instructors on how to integrate multicultural perspectives in classroom teaching. Using elective courses for extra credits and introducing interactive learning activities with peers could also increase intercultural sensitivity, including in PR education.

METHODOLOGY

Given the fact that cultural diversity hinges on perceptions, experiences and opinions, the research followed a qualitative design. The researcher aimed to explore the opinions of the participants on cultural diversity in the programme to determine how future practitioners are being shaped. The research methods included face-to-face individual interviews with PR managers and PR lecturers, and focus group discussions with PR students. It included a review of documents related to the topic under study. All the interviews and focus group discussions took place on the CPUT's Cape Town campus and were conducted before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The population for this study included PR students, PR lecturers and PR managers. Third-year PR students were included because they already have a theoretical understanding of what is expected of them as future professionals. The sample for this study was selected from those third-year PR students at CPUT who had worked as interns. This experience was crucial as it gave the researcher the opportunity to gauge their sentiments on their level of preparedness on cultural diversity while in the industry. These students are at a crossroads between campus and the PR field. Lecturers and managers were included for their opinion on the cultural diversity preparedness of the PR students. PR managers were included in the study, as they have to work with and supervise PR students who do internships as part of their training. These managers are in a unique position to judge the students' ability to grasp issues of cultural diversity as they apply to PR work. Finally, PR lecturers are responsible for providing the academic and theoretical knowledge necessary for students. Their participation in this study

offered a better understanding of the context in which the students learn before they enter the workplace.

Twenty-three participants were purposively selected for participation. This sampling technique ensured that participants, who had the relevant knowledge to provide insight into the topic under study, were selected (Babbie & Mouton 2001; De Vos *et al*. 2002; Sarantakos 1998; Struwig *et al*. 2001).

The study used qualitative thematic analysis to analyse the information collected through interviews (Sarantakos 1998). Central themes and inferences as well as conclusions were developed (Karlsson 2016; Krippendorff 1980; Sarantakos 1998).

RESULTS

Theme 1: The cultural diversity knowledge of PR students

The data revealed that the PR students at CPUT have some theoretical knowledge of cultural diversity. However, they lack the practical expertise to apply this in the professional environment. The students struggle to relate their theoretical knowledge to real-life situations, and they are not confident when applying their knowledge. During the focus group discussions, one student mentioned that they had been taught how to work in a multi-cultural environment. However, there seems to be gaps in their cross-cultural knowledge, especially when it comes to application.

Many South African graduates are not able to apply the theory into practice. – PR student

While we appreciate that theoretical knowledge is critical in our training process at the tertiary institution level, the fact that we cannot immediately apply this knowledge or see the correlation suggests that practical experience is complementary and key. Perhaps we need to be assessed on our cultural diversity knowledge so that we know how ready we are before the industry. – PR student

This confirms the findings of some studies that have suggested that PR professionals in Africa are not equipped to enter the international field of operations, as they have inadequate access to diversity education (PRISA 2019). Similarly, Toth (2009) argues that PR professionals rarely receive diversity education in preparation for entering the PR field. Schachner *et al.* (2016: 1196) further affirm that there are considerable shortcomings in diversity education, despite this knowledge being available.

I did not feel ready on this issue when I started my service training. There is huge variability in theory, which we were taught, and the reality we face when we are going to the industry. – PR student

One respondent mentioned that the PR programme includes various field trips. The aim of these activities is to broaden students' horizons and to provide them with perspectives on the real environment in which PR professionals operate. However, cultural diversity is not the focus of learning during the trips. The students acknowledged that the make-up of classrooms allow for diversity when students from different cultural backgrounds

are put together. Most of them made the point that they can navigate the differences for the sake of completing a project. However, they fail to retain these lessons as part of their learning and to carry this to the industry.

Creativity

The data showed that students are encouraged to be creative when doing projects and assignments. This offers some opportunity to apply cultural diversity knowledge.

Generally, group assignments are an opportunity for us to share ideas and experiences with classmates from different cultures. It is true that lecturers try to form groups based on the differences of skills and cultures. – PR student

The interviews with lecturers revealed that PR students are given exercises aimed at stimulating their creativity. Bennett (2014: 45) holds that the ability to adapt experiences and ideas to each customer's needs is a sign of cultural diversity knowledge. Bennett (ibid.) stresses that the goal for companies is to tap into the knowledge and ideas generated by a diverse workplace, which provides the organisation with more ideas that can ultimately lead to better decision-making processes. However, while creativity is emphasised in the PR programme, there is no focus on using the culturally diverse environment in which the students learn to contribute to this trait. For example, students are allowed to choose the groups in which they want to work. Most students, according to the participants, gather along the same racial lines most of the time. This does not allow for cross-cultural experience sharing. They are not clearly instructed to work across cultures to benefit the process of coming up with creative solutions.

From an industry perspective, most students from the PR programme at CPUT are perceived to be capable and reliable. The industry participants explained that the high levels of creativity among these students make them valuable to companies. The industry participants, however, felt that students lack specific cultural diversity skills when they first take up positions as interns.

It is also important to have a conversation with tertiary institutions on how students can be better equipped on cultural diversity knowledge and how to leverage it. – PR manager

Practice makes perfect and practical exercises need to be enhanced and increased for students before they enter the industry. This is to ensure that they are fully prepared. But practicals need to be adapted and aligned to the industry's needs. Students from CPUT demonstrate a level of competence but emphasis needs to be put on how the PR industry is evolving. The demand of a globalised world and challenges for PR professionals should be stressed. – PR manager

Teamwork

The focus group sessions and interviews revealed that lecturers make an effort to enable students to work in teams. One lecturer indicated that working groups are formed across racial lines.

This study found that working together with people from different cultural backgrounds is beneficial to the students as that enables sharing of skills, ideas and perspectives through interaction and socialisation. – PR lecturer

This is only possible when the lecturers themselves play a role in forming groups. In such circumstances, the lecturers try to create culturally diverse groups to ensure greater inclusivity and higher exposure to varied viewpoints. Some of the students failed to see the correlation between these group activities and the need to work across racial lines to be better quipped for the PR industry. The students indicated that they had not noticed any difference in their cultural sensitivity because of working in diverse groups. They did not feel that teamwork in this regard ensures a high degree of preparedness concerning cultural diversity.

Cultural self-awareness

The focus group discussions showed that PR students are generally aware of the differences between themselves and the individuals around them. Cultural self-awareness and a person's ability to see how their culture has influenced them speak to consciousness. The focus group indicated that most students are aware of how their cultural background has shaped their personality.

People from different backgrounds and with different values work in the same environment, and they view the world in different ways and unite to work in the same project. – PR student

During the focus group discussion, students said that cultural diversity is discussed freely during classes without undue restrictions. They understand the influence of culture in a general manner. The study further revealed that the PR programme at CPUT makes provision for subjects, like communication science, that explore cultural diversity. The students confirmed that studying communication science gave them a better understanding of what to expect from culturally diverse workplaces. The course guide indicates that students are taught communication science in the first, second and fourth years of study.

However, the research showed that there is a discrepancy between the awareness of cultural diversity instilled and transmitted to students, and their ability to put this into practice once they enter the industry.

While the knowledge is conveyed to us, it is not made explicit that this is a critical skill for a PR student; we are ambivalent of its real-life application. – PR student

Flexibility

The majority of students agreed that it takes a reasonable amount of time to adapt to the demands of the industry once they commence their internships. Most students also indicated they are expected to develop pragmatism in the work of PR when they take up their internship positions. However, it is only when they are in the industry that they fully grasp cultural diversity and how it affects the profession of PR.

The literature review established that practitioners face even greater diversity, operating "across time zones, within different political, economic, and social systems, and with varying media constraints" (Wakefield 2008: 141). Wakefield (ibid.) underlines that practitioners seek relationships with multinational populations who differ in national income, literacy, religion, environment, poverty, technology, governance, and language. Therefore, the issue of adaptability is central to the work of a PR professional.

Respect and empathy

Respect and empathy include an appreciation for other people's differences. It is crucial to respect the cultures and perspectives of different people. It can help to minimise conflict between different people and ensure that multiple people can work with one another with ease. Respect and empathy also breed significant goodwill for specific professionals and the organisations that they represent. The data show that industry stakeholders assign importance to proper team development. Industry stakeholders were adamant that the key to strong team development is the appreciation of differences in opinions.

In this regard, PR managers remarked that CPUT PR students usually accept and appreciate the cultural diversity of their colleagues when they enter the workplace. One PR account director and supervisor of interns further affirmed that they have never experienced cases of racism, xenophobia, or any other element of rejection for the other from interns. The problem, however, remains that students still struggle to figure out how these differences can be an asset for them as PR professionals. The lecturers also stated that students understand that differences in others have the potential to broaden horizons, provide growth, and help to gain new insights.

Finally, the students revealed that cultural differences are palpable within the PR programme at CPUT, and they learn to work and accept each other, but students pointed out that there are many instances where classmates want to work with those of the same culture; thus, making it difficult to understand and learn about other cultures.

Critical thinking

Deductive reasoning refers to the process of moving from general premises to particular conclusions. The PR managers consider it important for students to develop critical thinking skills before starting their training in the industry. There was also an understanding that real-life exercises and the industry setting help to facilitate students' ability to think critically and to connect the dots. The PR managers were unanimous that many CPUT PR students enter the field with encouraging signs in the area of critical thinking.

Nevertheless, their critical thinking skills need to be cultivated more in line with the requirements of the industry and the constantly changing environment. – PR manager

Students require more real-life experiences, while at universities, on how to use diversities of races and environments to their advantage. – PR manager

The lecturers, on the other hand, indicated that cultivating students' abilities to assess the soundness of knowledge claims and arguments is one of the most important objectives of the PR programme at CPUT. Priority is given to how this skill can be transmitted to students, primarily through group and individual assignments.

Critical thinking is demanded, stimulated and rewarded in most instances. – PR lecturer

The lecturers agreed that there is a need for more engagement and alignment with the industry with respect to critical thinking. Although most students share the view that critical thinking skills are presented as very important in the learning process, they are unsure if they have what it takes to tackle the demands of the industry.

Language development

PR recruiters regard the ability to speak more than one language as an asset, as evident from the interviews with industry representatives.

A student who can speak different languages has a lot to bring to the firm. Our challenge is also to be able to relate to diverse target audiences; language becomes a barrier at times. – PR manager

Students generally speak more than one language. South African students are usually able to speak and write in English/Afrikaans/Xhosa, for instance. For us, the more, the better. – PR manager

Multilingualism allows the PR professional to relate, communicate and engage with various audiences for the benefit of his/her clients.

National understanding of different languages and cultures are needed to be able to address the cultural diversity question. – PR manager

As far as the PR programme at CPUT is concerned, the students indicated that they would like to learn new languages, in addition to English and their various first languages. There was a call by the students for a language course. The students would like to learn to speak, read and write in specific languages, such as Afrikaans and French, to ensure that they could reach out to a linguistically diverse audience.

DISCUSSION

The PR curriculum and teamwork

The PR programme at CPUT has in place various activities that encourage students to work together across cultures, thereby helping to ensure that students learn about cultural diversity through proper interaction. It includes group assignments and other projects that require collaboration and understanding of one another. Azman and Erdil (2013: 27) indicate that people who have cultural diversity knowledge tend to work in synergy and to value different viewpoints, as they understand that this increases the chance for positive opportunities.

However, the results show that students are unable to put the cultural diversity knowledge gained to use in real-life situations when they enter the industry. The industry respondents decried the fact that students are not always capable of connecting the dots on the issue of cultural diversity, and its importance for a PR professional. The current activities and projects contained in the curriculum should promote teamwork and do so implicitly.

The PR curriculum and cultural self-awareness

The data collected from the research also indicated that the PR curriculum was under review to adapt it to the PR environment. There was also recognition that the curriculum should evolve at the same pace as trends in the industry. The students asserted that the knowledge conveyed to them did not make it explicit that cultural diversity was a critical skill. They also argued that they were not taught hands-on approaches to apply cultural diversity knowledge in the workplace. Most of the students also indicated that they were expected to develop an understanding of real fieldwork and cultural aspects when they started their internship programmes, and it was only then that they fully comprehended the notion of cultural diversity.

On the specific issue of cultural diversity preparedness, the institution acknowledged the need to upgrade the current curriculum so that it catered to issues that were of practical interest to the students and industry. A different approach to how cultural diversity is taught to students before joining the industry should be considered. Cultural diversity is an important learning component, but there is no particular emphasis on this issue in the curriculum and students are trusted to understand and adopt this concept as they progressed in the course.

The role of field trips in cultural diversity education

Several field trips form part of the PR curriculum at CPUT. A field trip to the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre serves to help them gain knowledge of different cultures to enrich their cultural experience. This allows the students to understand the ill effects of cultural discrimination and exclusion. A trip to South Africa's Parliament helps students to understand that diverse people in the same country can be connected despite their differences. The trip to the Parliament also serves to help students consider its impact on the political thoughts and viewpoints of the people. It further informs the students of the functioning of the different political bodies.

The curriculum also includes a community engagement project with an NGO. This helps students understand how people from different cultures interact with their environment. The NGO project requires students to take part in a field trip to an NGO and interact with the volunteers and management involved in the project. As the project deals with community engagement, interacting and working with stakeholders of the organisation is imperative.

To help students understand media relations, they are required to take part in the Cape Town International Jazz Festival. Students are able to interact with people from

diverse cultures, and they are exposed to how the Festival brings people together and the role of the international media in facilitating interaction.

Students are encouraged to determine the impact of living conditions on people's views and their culture by studying an integration project in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Students have to explore the differences between the different people who reside in the Western Cape Province. The students learn that differences in living conditions, economic status and the cultural environment determine how people interact with their community, as well as with people of other districts and communities.

The PR curriculum and language development

During the interviews, the students expressed the desire to learn a new language as part of the curriculum so that their cultural understanding could be enhanced. Making the curriculum multilingual would mean that students stood a better chance of being culturally prepared for the workplace. Exposure to different languages also creates an understanding of the history of the language and the culture of the people. Add-on courses on linguistic diversity could be the key to cultural diversity. Integrated learning and group work could help students to meet people from other cultures and to enhance their intercultural sensitivity. Multicultural education also focuses on professional development and training through seminars, workshops and student exchange programmes.

The PR curriculum, creativity and critical thinking

The study indicates that creativity is a critical element of cultural diversity knowledge (UNESCO 2009). Belanger (2015: 16) also states that creativity and problem-solving efficiency are among the benefits of focusing on cultural diversity in any company. PR managers consider it important for students to develop critical thinking skills before starting their training in the industry. Although the majority of students from the PR programme at CPUT are viewed as capable and reliable, the industry players felt that students lacked creativity and critical thinking skills.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that cultural diversity is one of the leading concerns of PR agencies across the world. Due to the international expansion of business, companies now deploy culturally diverse employees so that they gain a better understanding of foreign markets; thus, enabling them to achieve a competitive advantage within the market sphere. Anais *et al*. (2019) argue that internationalisation of the business process management system has inspired companies to serve hitherto unknown market spheres. It also implies that companies have to service an ethnically diverse range of consumers.

Given the above, PR professionals have to deal with all kinds of communities, each with their unique characteristics. According to Azzopardi and McNeill (2016), effective PR comes from good experience. The findings of this study suggest that PR students

at CPUT have significant theoretical knowledge, also about cultural diversity, but that they struggle to implement this in practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the findings of the study, PR students should not only be encouraged to embrace cultural diversity as a critical skill, but the curriculum should be adapted so that students are given tools and are placed in an environment where they can succeed in this area. To reach this goal, tertiary institutions and the industry should have a more intimate relationship that enables constant feedback between the two parties during the internship process. In this way, the sector could regularly give information and feedback to the institution on the areas that need improvement. This collaboration should extend beyond the internship period. This would help tertiary institutions to design programmes that are in line with industry expectations on critical skills, such as cultural diversity knowledge.

Moreover, students should be evaluated on cultural diversity skills to ensure that they are able to relate easily with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Lecturers should also be intentional when constituting groups for assignments. They should ensure that they mix students in ways that allow for diversity. In addition, campus life should be flexible in ways that encourage discussions and interactions among people of diverse cultures. This could be supported by the participation of people from varied cultures coming together in an informal setting to discuss their culture, viewpoints, family setting, and the socio-economic setting.

CPUT could also include new courses as part of academic learning to promote the cultural diversity preparedness of the students at the University, such as a course from the Multi-Cultural Leadership Foundation. Such a course could be designed specifically for the students in their first year to encourage them to learn about other cultures.

Practical and interactive workshops could be arranged as part of the curriculum for the students in their second year. Such workshops could include group work where intercultural groups could be formed to take part in workshops. Current skills and industry trends should be taught so that students are ready to face workplace demands.

Lastly, the university could arrange fellowship schemes. Educators from other universities could be invited to teach languages and courses that are specific to their universities. Such a fellowship programme could be instrumental in exposing students to other cultures. This could enhance students' cultural preparedness and limit their cross-cultural resistance.

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