



Student Career Management and Built Employability Capacity: Exploring the Role of Student Relationship Management

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STUDENT CAREER MANAGEMENT AND BUILT EMPLOYABILITY CAPACITY: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF STUDENT RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Research full-length paper

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Abstract

The current study responds to the call by extant literature, on the need for universities to establish improved practises that can better facilitate graduate transition to the labour market. So far, most employability studies in the global south are descriptive and have focused mainly on the curriculum taught in various universities, its inadequacies, and the need for policy transformation towards higher education. Few other studies have called for development centres, guidance, and counselling offices or even career offices to better build students' employability capacity. And where career offices are set up, there are still arguments concerning low quality and unavailability in universities. Considering the case of nascent and yet-to-be-developed career offices, the question of service design that fits into actor career needs is of concern. This study sought to address this problem using concepts of student career management, customer (student) relationship management and employability capacity building. A qualitative approach involving focus group discussion was used in data collection. Out of four practises established, self-career management and basic communication resonate with existing student career management practises for employability capacity building. The study recommends ways in which student relationship management can be embedded in student career management by universities.

Keywords: student relationship management, student career management, employability, capacity building, social media,

1 Introduction

Graduate employability has been a global challenge where different actors continue to establish causes and solutions in different contexts. As noted by the United Nations (2020) about 12 million graduates in Sub Sahara Africa (SSA) join the labour market each year. However, due to a glut of challenges, only 25% secure descent graduate employment. The remaining percentage of graduates join other past unemployed graduates who have either; (i) Searched for employment without success for periods stretching to ten years or more (ii) embarked on further education to fulfil varied reasons including employment and higher salaries (iii) joined informal sector as a means of survival (iv) settled for low paying jobs or underemployment (v) shifted to careers sectors in disciplines other than the ones studied due to job demand (vi) migrated overseas for better prospects both for education and career stability. (Meyer and Mncayi, 2021; Kirui, 2019; McCowan, 2018; Pop and Khampirat, 2018 and Mgaiwa, 2021).

Still, the youthful population keeps burgeoning and is expected to reach 830M by 2050 (UN, 2020). Currently, the majority of these youths are opting for higher education to secure decent jobs in their labour market. However, concerns are raised as to the preparedness of the countries for the transition of these youthful graduates from higher education to the labour market. Whereby, economies continue to expand with a disproportionate increase in formal jobs that could accommodate youthful graduates (Harry et al. 2018; Pop and Khampirat, 2018).

Background of universities and employability capacity building

Existing studies conducted on university role towards employability have been on different dimensions, where there is a focus on employer perceptions of graduate skills (Kirui, 2019); graduate students' perception of university education such as in (Harry, Chinyamurindi and Mjoli, 2018); ongoing students' perceptions (Pop and Khampirat, 2018); opportunities for employability capacity building (Okolie, Nwosu and Mlanga, 2019; Benson, Morgan and Filippaios, 2013; Rae, 2007) and complementary function of employability units of universities (Ndebele and Ndlovu, 2019; White, Becker and Du Plessis, 2021). From the extant studies, graduate employability is opined as a challenge that should be addressed holistically by universities and their stakeholders.

One of the holistic practises being adopted by employability units such as Career Service Offices (CSOs) is the use of social media technologies. A preliminary web survey, by the researchers, on the use of social media for career management practices by the top 30 universities globally (Webometrics, 2021), showed that all the global top 30 universities had adopted dedicated social media platforms for career service management. Adoption methods varied, for instance, universities developing their own cross-functional social media platforms or establishing collaboration platforms amongst competing universities; or even shared platforms with external stakeholders including employer organizations, alumni, parents, peers, and other societal groups. For instance, Handshake was a common yet private social media platform for student career management, used among students, faculty, competing universities and employer organizations for some career development programs. Despite these developments, scarce literature has focused on the holistic practices of social media use in employability capacity building.

Studies on social media adoption in HEI, for instance, Blashke (2014); Al Rahmi et al. (2018) and Dragseth (2020) discuss adoption at student-student level and instructor-student level. Where employability learning, entails interactions between faculty and students. However, as established from employability literature, interactions go beyond student-faculty relationships to include employer organizations, alumni, and society in general (Contronei-Baird, 2019; Rowe and Zegwaard, 2017; Boden and Nedeva, 2010; Waraich and Ameen, 2010). In addition, employability capacity building emanates from the interplay of opportunities arising from these stakeholder interactions. And even though universities are documented to treat students' career management opportunities separately, the stakeholders, for instance, the students, gather or combine, consume, and evaluate their experiences based on their defined tastes and preferences. Hence the need for CSOs to establish a holistic approach towards the use of social media in student career management questions.

Social media can be attributed to learning in several ways, first, it enables students to independently interact (through self-service technologies) with other groups of stakeholders to obtain personalised insight. Second, social media can be used by universities to provide multiple opportunities for career activities participation. Third, social media enables the university to understand user behaviour across their customer journey experience and hence can better address career management phases such as value proposition, feedback, and complaint handling (English et al. 2020; Fillipaios and Benson, 2019; Sutherland and Ho, 2017; He et al. 2017; Kluemper, Mitra and Wang, 2016; Benson et al. 2013 and Manroop and Richardson, 2013). At the holistic level, social media would require advanced integration with information systems to enable holistic organizational learning (Alt and Reinhold, 2020; Alago, Alt and Obuba, 2021). Information systems such as student relationship management enable integration of social media data, coordinated management of shared platforms, storage and retrieval of data and reusable information, as well as monitoring or learning of user activities over time to predict usage behaviours.

In SSA, there are still arguments concerning the low quality and unavailability of these career services in existing universities, thus limiting opportunities for contribution towards students' employability capacity building (for instance, McCowan, 2018; Okolie et al. 2019; Okolie et al. 2020). To the best knowledge of the researchers, there exists a knowledge gap about how these services are offered currently, and whether an innovative approach towards service design of career services can better fit the actor's need. Thus, prompting the question of how? And in what ways can the career office better facilitate employability capacity building? To answer these questions, the study sought to explore the relationship between student career management, student relationship management and employability capacity building. Two objectives were used (i) to establish the existing student career management practises adopted by students for employability capacity building and (ii) to establish the potential of student relationship management on the link between student career management and the built employability capacity of students. The remainder of this paper is organized into six sections; that is, related literature, research setting, methodology, findings and discussions, study implications, research limitations and suggestions for future studies.

The study setting was based on the service dominant logic (SDL), where service providers facilitate the service co-creation process (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Through facilitation by the CSO, the service clients can integrate their resources by mutually engaging in beneficial employability interactions, that result in service co-creation. From this view, concerns for a CSO would include, (i) establishing value propositions, (ii) setting out boundaries for service co-creation, (iii) provision platforms for holistic resource integration and interaction activities that enhance CSO performance (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). This approach has significance in contexts where CSOs are established but are yet to address students' needs or are nascent or are even yet to be established in the university setup, as experienced in the SSA.

2 Related literature

2.1 Student Career Management Practises

Existing literature discusses student career management in different dimensions, including individual, organizational, and institutional dimensions. At the individual level, student career management is an individual process or competence or positioning where a learner constructs his knowledge concerning individual career pathways and makes significant decisions on career interest, development and growth (Benson et al, 2013; Wang and Jiao, 2022; Brigstock, 2009). At the organizational level, student career management is a managerial process (Peña-González, Nazar and Alcover, 2021), it entails planning, execution and assessment. The organization facilitates the learner's career journey through the provision of opportunities and resources for career development and growth (de Schepper and Sotiriadou, 2017). Where opportunities revolve around organizational structuring, process reengineering, stakeholder engagement and strategic partnerships and collaboration for resource exchange (Okolie et al. 2019 and Okolie et al. 2020).

Student career management, at the individual level, can be facilitated by a university through physical or virtual resources (He et al. 2017). Physical methods may involve face-to-face meetings for skill-building and knowledge exchange. Virtual methods, on the other hand, involve the use of digital channels such as social media technologies. Virtual methods are currently practised by organizations during onboarding new employees globally; upskilling of staff or employees; retraining in organizations (Weinert et al. 2021), and a potential method of building the employability skills gap of students (Benson et al. 2013; He et al. 2016). From extant literature, the student career management practises identified were activities embedded within the career management phases; self-career management by students; content practises and social media use.

2.1.1 Activities embedded within career management phases

Student career management phases entail career awareness, career interest, career exploration, career development and career assessment (Zondag and Brink, 2017; Benson et al. 2013; He et al. 2017). Studies including Bonner et al. (2019); and Zondag and Brink (2017) note that activities/practises embedded in career awareness include onboarding programs, orientation, and mentorship. Largely, these practices are undertaken to initiate the thought process towards career management programs (Zondag and Brink, 2017; Bonner et al. 2019). At the career interest phase, studies including Clevenger and MacGregor (2019) note that the activities include enrolment in career programs such as career fairs, field visits, apprenticeships, networking, and volunteering. These activities influence students to narrow down the broad experience obtained at school to areas of focus for career building (Bridgstock, 2009; Clevenger and MacGregor, 2019).

Studies on the career exploration and growth phase such as Pitan and Atiku (2017) and Okolie et al. (2019) opine that this phase consists of the use of career adaptability resources, career guidance activities and Integrated Learning and self-reflection tools. The facilitators at this phase initiate activities that enable students to establish their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. (Green, Noor and Hashami, 2020; Okolie et al. 2019; Pitan and Atiku, 2017; de Schepper and Sotiriadou, 2017; Bennett, Knight and Bell, 2020; Clinkard, 2018). Generally, career exploration and growth activities are opined to enable a student to determine whether a career choice is a short-term or a long-term endeavour (Guertin, 2015; Zondag and Brink, 2017).

Lastly, the career assessment phase where assessment tests are the common practices used in student career management (Sultana, 2013; Kaushal and Vashisht, 2021). For instance, the use of formative, summative, competence-based or non-competence-based assessments (Sultana, 2013); use of written reflections or self-assessments and interviews (Bonner et al. 2019) and career evaluation based on societal customs and principles (Kaushal and Vashisht, 2021). Generally, these activities enable both learner and facilitator to establish the extent of career development (Bonner et al. 2019).

2.1.2 Self-career management

In this theme, self-career management consists of the individually experienced career processes through which a graduate undergoes to facilitate their career building (Bridgstock, 2009). This includes self-management of the entire career process including career guidance and support, career development activities and engagements and decision-making based on assessments (Pitan and Atiku, 2017). As noted in career management literature, self-career management is dependent on career management skills, and career interests, and time is taken to develop self-career management attributes (Barkas and Armstrong, 2022; Thompson et al. 2013).

Given Lent and Brown's (2013) career self-management model, several intrinsic attributes, including personal attributes, learning experiences, background, affordances, outcome expectations, self-efficacy expectations, goals, and actions, interact to accomplish the expected outcomes. Turner et al. (2022) adapt the career self-management model (Lent and Brown, 2013) to investigate career goals and establish a link between career goals, self-career management, and the attainment of expected outcomes. Implying self-career management to be a set of attributes. On the contrary, Brown et al. (2021) classify self-career management as a form of career adaptive behaviour rather than an attribute and note that career adaptive behaviour differs across different cultures, and therefore carries different meanings in line with job suitability.

2.1.3 Content attributes and features

Content attributes of information facilitate the engagement process from passivity to full engagement in activities by employability actors (Beyrouiti, 2017; Zondag and Brink, 2017; Hussey, 2011). For instance, employers seek to establish content that would portray a positive brand image to attract future

employees from high-standard, higher education institutions (Kluemper et al. 2016). This also relates to universities, which seek to establish content that promotes a reputation for strategic partnerships. In this theme, content influences the entire process of social career management, self-career management, and the resultant student career management behaviours. Employability actors effectively obtain information for career decision-making or participation in value interactions (Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk, 2009; Zondag and Brink, 2017). These content attributes may include, reliability of the information, quality of information, shareability to networks, and mobile vs. static content (Beyrouti, 2017; Benson et al. 2013; Filipaiaos and Benson, 2019).

Practises in content management would include (1) the use of trusted sources in conveying information with students and other actors (2) the establishment of a reputable brand to communicate quality (3) the inclusion of shareability features to facilitate actor information sharing among their networks (4) prioritising on channels used by actors, (5) creative output, which elicits self-reflection by students. Also, the use of dynamic content ensures regularly updated information, when compared to static content.

2.1.4 Social media use

In this theme, social media is viewed to be a technological solution that provides: access to different career development capital including social, cultural and psychological capital (Donald, Baruch and Ashleigh, 2017; English et al. 2020; Fillipaiaos and Benson, 2019); personal adoption and self-efficacy to career development programs (English et al. 2020; Huang, 2015); room for adjusting career development programs to match the changing global labour market needs (Lichy and Khvatova, 2019); individualised two-way interactions, generation, usage and sharing of content (Benson et al. 2013; Richmond, Rochefort and Hitch, 2015; Kluemper, 2016).

However, despite these affordances, other streams of literature including Manroop and Richardson (2013), Benson, et al. (2013) and Benson and Morgan (2016) argue that these affordances are not effectively utilised by students and universities. Hence the need for universities to consider further facilitation of social media use and competence by students (Benson, et al. 2013; Sutherland and Ho, 2017). To this end, the practices surrounding the use of social media technologies include (1) the use of social media for one-on-one or group conversations and personal branding; (2) the use of social media to strengthen social networks, and continuity of interactions online (3) use of social media to create and maintain virtual communities. Finally, (4) channel selection, where the channel users determine the channel used for one-on-one or group engagements or professional channels for student career management.

2.2 Student Relationship Management

The involvement of multiple actors in social knowledge construction brings out the need for further investigation of customer relationships and resource integration (Sun and Yuen, 2012). Career service offices can effectively utilise the multiple employability actors as resources in knowledge construction, and hence tools enhancing customer relationship management are significant, in this case, Student Relationship Management, a modified version of Customer Relationship Management (Hilbert et al. 2007). Student relation management systems such as campus management systems not only facilitate teaching and learning management but also resource integration and cross/functional management (Alt and Auth, 2010). To the best knowledge of the researcher, there exists scarce information detailing the actual use of student relationship management alongside student career management for employability capacity building.

Unlike customer relationship management, student relationship management has its distinct features tailored for universities including strategy, student services, student lifecycle and value proposition and experience journey (Phuengrod, Wannapiroon and Nilsook (2021; Hilbert, Schönbrunn and Schmode 2007). In response to the varied employability life cycles of actors, student relationship management is significant in the organization of separate strategies at each phase of the student life cycle. Some of the

CRM areas identified in past studies such as Alt and Reinhold (2020) and applicable in student career management include Campaign management, lead management, offer management, feedback management, service management, complaint management and cross-functional management.

Benefits of a student relationship management system in student career management may include: (i) personalization of career services offered to student's needs, such as career explorations, communities joined, career support sought training selected (ii) Engagement with strategic partners such as student associations, alumni organizations, competing universities and employer organizations or associations in a unified platform. (iii) Opportunity for value co-creation among actors through service provider platform. (iv) Broad range of career development choice areas for students because of community engagement (Phuengrod, 2021; Hilbert et al. 2007; Alt and Reinhold, 2020)

2.3 Underpinning theoretical framework: Service Dominant Logic

This study borrows its theoretical framework from the service dominant logic (SDL) proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004). As discussed by the SDL proponents, service-dominant logic may be defined as a logic, a mindset (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2014), a theoretical framework, a marketing research paradigm, and a strategic orientation (Anderson, Pearo and Widener, 2008; Karpen, Bove and Lukas, 2011). Service dominant logic was developed in response to marketing orientation where services were opined to be part of goods production, and hence the need to view service as a dominant product during the production process (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

Service Dominant Logic is preferred by the researchers, where besides factoring in the individual, organisational and institutional logics in service co-creation, it (1) focuses primarily on services and service management and (2) broadly enables the explanation of career service in the three main areas of CSO operations, that is at the individual level, organizational level and institutional level that are to be addressed, and hence positions the role of students and the career services offices, in employability capacity building of students.

In the study, the theoretical framework is limited to the individual level. As a result, the areas investigated in this study concern three constructs, that is service, value and individual attributes. This implies that, while clients, such as students and employers can be involved in the co-creation of service or service bundles, the individual attributes in terms of knowledge and skill competencies and capabilities will fuel the service co-creation process. Further, the CSOs must establish and actualise value systems that result in mutual definitions of value, relevance in value proposition and value-co-created outcomes. Individual attributes such as knowledge, skill competencies and capabilities are emphasized as a necessity to actualise SDL orientation, where each actor as a resource integrates with other actors for value co-creation. These resource integration activities must be in line with the interfaces provided by the organization as well as the mutual interests of each actor (Vargo and Lush, 2008).

3 Research setting

This case study involved the selection of the target population from two universities involved continuously as the main cases under study, the University of Nairobi, and Mount Kenya University. Additional focus groups were considered from two other universities, Kenyatta University and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology but resulted in the same recurring themes and hence the data collection was concluded at this point. The main criteria of inclusion were (i) availability of career office or career services (ii) social media presence (iii) campus management system presence (iv) willingness of involvement both by research assistants and students. The researcher emailed all prospective participants an online form that served both as an invitation to the focus group discussion and the consent form where they were required to add demographic details and confirm participation.

To guide the focus group discussions, the student career management practises established during the literature review were used to detail the open-ended questions for the focus group discussion. The

sections of the questions asked included (i) The students' career management activities viewed to be important and used in career management by the students (ii) the attributes perceived to be important for student career management and (iii) perceptions concerning content attributes and social media practices provided by the career offices.

3.1 Methodology

Focus group discussion (FGD) was the method used to answer the first study objective. As explained in past studies, a focus discussion group is a qualitative research approach where a researcher seeks to group individuals to discuss a specific topic (Nyumba, et al. 2018). Early practitioners of this methodology included Merton et al. (1956) and it has been prevalently used in social research (Sim and Waterfield, 2019; Nyumba, et al. 2018; Parker and Tritter, 2006). Among some of the reasons that led to the use of FGD was the fact that it is affordable (Parker and Tritter, 2006); it provides a platform where participants undergoing similar experiences can voice conflicting points of view (Nyumba, et al. 2018); FDG encourages critical thinking surrounding a phenomenon since it is highly participatory and lastly, it was the most appropriate method ethically (Sim and Waterfield, 2019), given that the data was collected during the period COVID 19 cases were still prevalent even in universities and physical discussion would have posed a risk to participants. The intention of the researcher was therefore to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' perspectives on the existing student career management practises (Nyumba, et al. 2018; Sim and Waterfield, 2019).

Fourteen students were selected from each university to be participants in the focus group discussion (n=56). These students varied in terms of their level of study and their course disciplines. This was important in minimising bias and having a heterogenous set-up, which is suitable for focus group discussions (Morgan, 2002). The researchers involved lecturers who taught common units in these universities as research assistants to facilitate the mobilizing, negotiation, and arrangement of the timing of the focus group discussions with the potential participants. Access to participants, within the research period, was most favourable, through their lecturers who had already exchanged personal contacts (email/phone number) and were trusted authorities in the university. Also, the research assistants (lecturers) were assumed to have developed some level of rapport with their students; had some form of knowledge of student groups that they teach during the semester and hence, were well placed in randomly selecting students from different disciplines.

Each focus group had a sample of between 6 and 8 participants, and each of the eight FGDs averagely lasted for one hour (n=8 hours). Zoom platform was provided for the FGDs, where the participants were required to purchase a data bundle with a strong internet connection to avoid interruptions in between the conversations. As a result, participation online was successful for the required one hour, while observing health requirements of social distancing. The students were each compensated for the airtime they used once their discussion session was completed. The discussion was useful in clarifying the students' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as deriving the recurring themes that seemed to be common in all the focus group discussions.

A Google invitation form was then sent to the research assistants, who shared it with the selected participants. The selected participants were required to read the note placed, which articulated the purpose of the discussion invitation, and their consent was required if they chose to participate in the discussion. The proceedings of the focus group discussions were recorded using the Zoom recording function and later used during the transcription. The coding process for content analysis was guided by recommendations from Hsieh and Shannon (2005), where (i) the predetermined codes from the literature review were used in the data collection tool to obtain participant responses (ii) all instances indicating student career management were identified and categorized (ii) all highlighted instances were further coded to determine the predetermined codes as sampled in Appendix 1. The QDA Miner content analysis software was used for the content analysis.

4 Findings and discussions

4.1 Findings

All participants were identified through coding where codes were assigned randomly and in the sequence of focus groups held. The respondents were coded 001, 002, 003...and so on. The female participants were generally more (n=55.4%) than their male counterparts. The majority age range was between 20 and 25 years (n=73.2%). Most participants were from the public universities (n=75.0%) and were located within Nairobi (n=50%). The disciplines of the students ranged from Hospitality (n=22%), Bachelor in Education (n=20%), Business and Economics (n=18%), IT (n=15%), Computer Science (n=5%), Law (n=7%), Engineering and Built Environment (n=5%) and Pure and Applied Sciences (n=5%). Next, the findings from the discussion are explained in five themes: graduate attributes, graduate attribute acquisition, content practices, communication practices and social media usage practices.

4.1.1 Graduate attributes

Under this category, different attributes were identified which ranged between skills, values, and competencies. The respondents recognized that graduate attributes go beyond skills. While they agreed that these graduate attributes could be taught in class, it was also evident that some of these attributes required individual effort as they were innate. For instance, theoretical knowledge for a career, computer proficiency and work experience could be facilitated by the university, however other attributes such as discipline, communication skills and leadership were dependent on student nature and their individual experiences as they interacted with their environments.

4.1.2 Graduate Attribute Acquisition

From this theme, three main areas of graduate attribute acquisition were established: Information sources, personal effort, and networking. First, the information source was important in establishing the graduate attributes to be considered. The participants mentioned that their awareness was either through their lecturers, peers, parents or even employer organizations, who had pointed out attributes. Second, based on these insights, it would then take personal interest and effort to develop these attributes. However, these personal efforts were also not guaranteed since the courses pursued by some of the students were viewed as not to be necessary for their field. Third, some respondents were of the view that graduate attributes were not enough and that social classes and networking within employer organizations could secure better chances of employment considerations or success.

4.1.3 Content practises

From this theme, the respondents expressed their perceived challenges and experience with the content, while seeking information for their career management. As such challenges include: (i) access to outdated content; (ii) general content shared with all students; (iii) content that was only limited to specific counties in Kenya; (iv) career services as the only content creators for student's career management (v) lack of message continuity, where only one channel was used to share information without follow-up in other activities (vi) and lack of personalised content. To address these existing challenges in the current practises, the participants perceived that: (i) content recency (ii) content relevance and scope (iii) multiple content creators (iv) message continuity through different platforms or career activities (v) personalised content (vi) reliable and trustworthy content, respectively, were some of the content practises that would better facilitate their student career management efforts.

4.1.4 Communication practises

Based on this theme, communication practices by the university were at varying levels. The cases where communication for student career management was practised included: (i) orientation by the career services staff during orientation week (ii) communication by career service of opportunities to continuing students (iii) informal communication among individual networks on matters concerning career management. During events such as orientation week, students agreed that general information was mentioned concerning career prospects, the physical and online location of career services offices and the available services for students. Ongoing students regularly received general emails concerning upcoming events and activities. Most of the respondents noted that their career communication was mostly informal, amongst their networks including clubs and societies, employer organizations, mentors, and their mentor's network.

4.1.5 Social media usage practises

Based on this theme, the participants perceived that social media usage practises for student career management were three-fold: engagement, features, and data privacy. In terms of engagement, the participants perceived that their individual social media accounts were used in their engagements with peers. Most participants pointed out that they rarely used their social media accounts to engage in posts that had been placed by the career service office of their universities. In terms of features, participants perceived that the existing features in social media platforms could be used to create career management platforms where different types of unrelated career activities could be executed. Also, social media could be used to track/document the individual activities of students as they engage in career activities. In terms of data privacy, most participants noted that they felt secure with their individual social media accounts, and student portal provided by their universities. Hence similar terms and conditions could be used by their CSO for data privacy and security.

4.2 Learnings from the focus group discussion

From the above findings, it may be concluded that there is some level of student career management practices, both at individual and organizational levels. From these learnings, four student career management practices were established, that is, graduate attribute acquisition practices, content practices, communication practices and social media usage practices. Out of the four practises established, self-career management and basic communication resonated with existing student career management practises for employability capacity building.

Graduate attribute acquisition practices require learning from both the curricular and co-curricular activities, to establish the physical and innate attributes that contribute to career management. These career management activities are particularly mentioned in existing literature, about the need to establish career management phases and activities that enhance individual student career management (Zondag and Brink, 2017; Benson, et al. 2013; He et al. 2017; Bonner et al. 2019). The current study further argues that these activities meet career service needs when they are co-created among clients with mutual needs, which is not currently present.

Content practices are affected by the attributes they possess. This is in terms of recency, relevance, and reliability among other attributes that elicit a transition from passivity to full engagement. As established from the extant literature, content features act as motivators for clients towards change in engagement behaviour (Greenhaus et al. 2009; Zondag and Brink, 2017). The current study further argues that the interaction platforms provided by a CSO have an impact on fulfilling the content attributes sought by clients for engagement in service co-creation.

The study found that communication practices as well as social media practices were both formal and informal in students' career management. While CSOs had created social media accounts, participants still viewed these channels to be formal channels of communication of career management and not for

informal peer interactions on employability. On the other hand, when similar channels are created among peers, the aspect of informality in employability interactions arises. These learnings show that formality and informality may require integration, especially during the service co-creation activities. As noted in Lent and Brown (2013) self-career management has close linkages with the establishment of career goals and the attainment of expected outcomes. At the same period, there is a need for students to establish intrinsic attributes that could further maximize positive career outcomes (Lent and Brown, 2013; Barkas and Armstrong, 2022; Thompson et al. 2013).

The second research question sought to establish the potential of student relationship management on the link between student career management and the built employability capacity of students. As established from the first research objective above, student career management is facilitated by the CSOs. However, deficiencies are experienced between the services provided vis-à-vis the student career management desires and needs. Hence, there is a need to establish value propositions that address individual student needs and eventually result in service co-creation among the actors. It is on this basis that the second research question advances the argument on the potential of student relationship management on employability capacity building. This situation can be resolved by aligning career management activities along the student life cycle as shown below:

• Phase	• CRM areas	• Student life cycle
• 1. Marketing	i. Campaign management	i. Lead
	ii. Lead management	ii. Opportunity
• 2. Sales	i. Offer management	iii. Offer
	ii. Feedback management	iv. Customer
• 3. service	i. Service management	v. Service
	ii. Complaint management	vi. Repeated purchase of service
	iii. Cross-functional processes	

Table 1 Student life cycle and CRM (Adapted from Alt & Reinhold, 2020)

4.3 Discussion of findings

From the above table, the study proposes embedding student relationship management with student career management for the employability capacity building of students. Any service provider experiences at least six phases of their customers' lifecycle journey. Where the first phase begins with a lead or potential customer, who becomes aware of the opportunity offered by a service provider. Once the customer interacts with the service offer, conversion occurs where the sale is made. Thereafter the service provider facilitates the customer through the purchase and after purchase phases involving after-sales support and handling of complaints or returns. The service provider uses the three CRM areas, that is, marketing, sales, and service to facilitate the customer experience journey.

Similarly, this is evident in any student career management practice where the career service provider would need to understand varying student career needs before (marketing), during (sales) and after (service) pursuing desired courses. Before joining the university, the career office may engage in campaign and lead management, which involves all activities to create awareness and communicate the availability of student career management functions in the universities since at this phase potential students may be interested in understanding the different career paths a desired course may provide. Activities suggested in this phase include social media campaigns, market analysis, product innovation, brand management, event campaigns, community development and innovation management (Alt and Reinhold, 2020; Reinhold, 2018).

During the ‘sales’ phase, the career service office may engage in offer and feedback management. A clear definition of value propositions of career management activities would facilitate further development of interfaces or engagement platforms for career service co-creation. The offer is also accompanied by feedback management where the career service provider may modify the offerings to meet career management desires or value outcome expectations. Activities suggested at this phase include the set up of touch points and communication channels on social media networking platforms such as Facebook or physical platforms/centres; segmentation of clients including students at different phases of their learning life cycle, offering management and support of channel partners (Alt and Reinhold, 2020; Reinhold, 2018)

During the service phase, the CSOs may engage in service, complaint, and cross-functional processes. This involves all activities that are designed to support the customer through career activity undertakings and after a career activity experience. Activities suggested at this phase include community empowerment, community forums, customer support, proactive service and external support, say connection to a professional mentorship program (Alt and Reinhold, 2020; Reinhold et al. 2018).

5 Study Implications

Based on current findings, the study can conclude that, first, three main constructs affect each of the student career management practises. That is value proposition, service co-creation and individual attributes of actors involved. While value propositions motivate actors to engage in career management activities passively or fully for service co-creation, service co-creation occurs where a suitable platform is placed by the CSO. Therefore, a need for career service providers to consider matching the platform with the value propositions for service co-creation. Even though platforms such as social media can be used for user-generated content, the integration of these platforms with systems such as student relationship management can enable the CSOs to establish close relations with actors, for a deeper understanding of changing value propositions.

Secondly, while CSOs are primarily engaged in career service provision, the employability needs of actors, such as students, are broad and insatiable. Insisting on service provision may continue to harm rather than address the inadequacies currently experienced by the actors. CSOs need to transform from service creation to service facilitation. Engaging employability actors can further enable the co-creation of opportunities for services or service bundles desired for individual consumption.

Lastly, the individual attributes of the actors accompany their experiences in their career management journey. Hence the need for CSO to establish a close relationship with each of the actors. A closer relationship enables an in-depth understanding of student behaviour towards value propositions and the extent to which a student can be facilitated or supported in building their own employability capacity. These insights can be used to predict future learning activity opportunities, establish the touchpoints for student career management and ensure the attainment of desired employability capacity-building outcomes.

6 Research limitations and suggestions for future studies

First, the study concept focused on the individual level of student career management. As a result, the student career management practises identified are from the students’ perspectives. Future studies on student career management can also be studied at organizational and institutional levels.

Secondly, the study is prescriptive in nature. It identifies the existing student career management practises and provides an IT-based solution to bridging the gap between student career management and employability capacity building of students. Future studies can be replicated in similar contexts to further validate the findings.

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Appendices

Sample direct quotation	First coding	Second coding
<p>“One attribute is understanding what your field is all about” (006)</p> <p>“Employers values are very hard to be taught in class. They are personal attributes. So, if you can display values like reliability, being trusted and time management” (003)</p> <p>“Your history, because they have it in your CV and through interview, they will be able to analyse the person who you are. They will want experience, which is a challenge to students” (041)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Theoretical knowledge · Technical skills · Employer Values · Leadership skills · Networking · Work experience 	Graduate attributes (ii)
<p>“...because we are many, they cannot know interest of each one of us. So, the lecturers introduce you then when you are interested you can learn more about it. They cover a lot of places so that everybody can find their areas of interest...” (007)</p> <p>“...our main source of information where we acquire required attributes are our lecturers. they are the professionals...” (037)</p> <p>“...I am doing econ and math; i don’t think I need to do much. But some people think you have to do professional courses like CPA to be acquainted...” (028)</p> <p>“...also, when told to have experience, it’s not necessarily being very skilful, but how are you able to relate with others, communicate with others... able to do things not the exact task but what it takes and everything else around the skills being looked for...” (026)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Information sources (e.g., lecturers, peers, employer organizations) · Personal effort · Networking 	Graduate attribute acquisition practises (i)

Table 2 Sample extract for content analysis

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