

‘What do you want to do after graduation?’

Most students in health professions programmes often encounter this question. Some may have a clear answer or an awaiting job opportunity, while others might have hopes and dreams but no structured plan yet. Undoubtedly, some of you reading this might feel uneasy with this question as you have no idea yet.

Most health graduates should have good employment prospects given the omnipresent need for healthcare workers globally. Yet, are all graduates well prepared for all the job requirements in practice?

Employability is a hot topic in higher education.

While universities originally were places of ‘teaching universal knowledge’ with a main focus on personal development, the role of higher education institutions is being significantly refined in response to societal developments, including globalisation and privatisation of education in many places. Now, universities are expected to prepare their students for economically advantageous roles in society.^[1]

In many disciplines, this has prompted education programs to broaden their focus and add skills development to their curricula. Students in many areas are now learning communication skills, management and leadership skills or ‘21st century skills’ that are deemed important to obtain and maintain graduate jobs in the labour market.

In healthcare, curricula for medical, nursing, nutrition, physiotherapy or laboratory education have always been quite well aligned with labour market needs, with a strong focus on professional competencies and workplace-based education. However, the transition from education to practice remains very challenging. Employability in the context of what is needed for health graduates to *thrive* in the workplace and to contribute to society sustainably is gaining more interest.^[2]

Interprofessional collaborative practice is one example of professional competencies that are highly valuable in the healthcare workplace. How to best address this in education is a topic of ongoing development. In this issue, Moruwe *et al.* describe how providing a common language for students from across different disciplines is important to foster

meaningful interprofessional education. Knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and experiences of health sciences students using the international classification of functioning, disability and health to foster high-quality collaborative patient care.

This is particularly important in changing health systems, the alignment between workplace contexts and education needs continuous evaluation. Proposed by Kipkoech and Mosol in this issue, changing the scope of practice for nurse practitioners in Kenya has the potential to enhance the employability of nursing graduates and address situations where healthcare systems experience a shortage of physicians – but only if education and practice develop synergies.

Thriving in the workforce has been associated with client-centeredness and relationship-based care.^[2] Experiencing this during education, just as Erasmus *et al.* did when exploring the breastfeeding experiences of mothers of infants with cleft lip and palate, offers an important opportunity to practice these competencies in a protected environment. The paper by Dove *et al.* reminds us that sound mental health is a prerequisite for thriving and needs attention throughout all education phases.

From this perspective, conducting research as part of a degree is another example of employability development. URHJ offers students an opportunity to take this experience one step further and get their work reviewed and published, so they can enter the workforce with robust scientific competencies in their skillset.

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2. Leadbeatter D, Nanayakkara S, Zhou X, Gao J. Employability in health professional education: a scoping review. *BMC Med Educ.* 2023;23(1):33. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-022-03913-7>