

Complementing qualifications leads to candidate differentiation

For graduates and current students, the need to differentiate themselves from their peers in the job market is leading to them extending their studies into alternate qualifications to their main field. Thus, BA graduates could add finance or B.Com students could add communications.



© ximagination – 123RF.com

“Savvy jobseekers understand that the job market is tough but that they are not helpless and they have some power to elevate their candidacy over that of others with the same qualification,” says Wonga Ntshinga, senior head of programme: Faculty of ICT at The Independent Institute of Education.

“The job market is getting increasingly hard to crack, particularly in South Africa, with the unemployment rate growing quarterly and currently standing at 27.7%. This means that not only are people losing jobs, but also the number of graduates looking for work has increased. Because jobseekers have to continuously equip themselves with more skills, experience and education, we are increasingly seeing students and alumni wide-skilling, by opting to do an additional course to broaden their existing field of competence.”

According to the recent Future of Jobs report released by the World Economic Forum, the most sought-after skills in the workplace – what are termed 21st century skills – include complex problem solving, critical thinking, people management and coordination with others, judgment and decision making and cognitive flexibility.

“In order to be competent, but more importantly, to be able to demonstrate competency in these areas to future employers, broadening one’s field of expertise is vital.

“No amount of sound technical and theoretical understanding will suffice in the world of work, without a solid repertoire of complementary skills which demonstrate range, versatility and resilience. Currently, universities and private higher education institutions annually accommodate more than 1 million students, with government aiming to add 500,000 more students by 2030. This will exponentially increase the competition for employment, which means that the trend of wide-skilling is only set to increase in future.”

Popular qualification combos

1. **BA Degree + Finance for non-financial managers:** This combination offers an employer the attractive package of a candidate with strong thinking, reasoning and expressive skills combined with a grounding in the hard business skills required for any leadership position.
2. **B.Com/BSc (Computer Science) + Project Management/Communication or B.Com/BSc + Business Writing/Introduction to PR:** these combos show that a candidate can plan, initiate, execute and manage a team in a project within budget and time contracts, or has the communication skills to influence team members, clients and other stakeholders to achieve the company’s goals.

Adding writing skills to your competencies proves that you know how to conduct and write business documents and, as the need arises, to present the company internally or externally to important stakeholders.

3. **BA/B.Ed Degree + Instructional Design Online Course:** this combination demonstrates that you can help subject matter experts improve the learning experience of students by leveraging the most potent combination of educational theory with everything technology can provide. Almost all educational companies and corporate training divisions want instructional designers to ensure they offer effective learning – to have one that also has a strong educational background or grounding in the expressive skills of the Humanities enables these institutions to outcompete others.
4. **BSc + Brand/Marketing Management Short:** not only do you understand the world of science and your technical field, but you also understand brand building, marketing, communication and the need for creativity and innovation, which is vital for any company to ensure its growth and sustainability.
5. **Any degree + additional languages:** Whether a local or foreign language, being able to at least converse with and understand people from another culture will always broaden horizons and understanding, and will serve as a valuable addition to your CV.

“The above-mentioned combinations or their equivalents will cultivate your skills and leave you in a stronger position when looking for work and advancement in your career. These additional skills can come from formal traditional short courses, through certified online education, or through enrolling on a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course). The impact on your career is that you offer a potent skills combination and have demonstrated your commitment to continuous, lifelong learning. You are no longer just another applicant,” concludes Ntshinga.

For more information, go to www.theworldofwork.co.za.