AKADEMIA
AD FUTURUM PER FONTES

Characteristics of an *Akademia* graduate

Education in the true sense is an empowerment to serve – both the living human community in its natural household or environment and the valuable cultural belongings that the community inherit or must inherit. To educate is literally to 'raise', to bring young people to a responsible maturity, to help them to take good care of what has been given to them, to help them to be charitable toward their fellow humans.

– WENDELL BERRY, "Higher Education and Home Defense"

Something is good when it is prone to conserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community.

– ALDO LEOPOLD, "The Land Ethic"

1 INTRODUCTION

When reflecting on the preferred characteristics of an Akademia graduate, the Akademia vision, raison d'être / mission statement and values was taken into account, but also the national and international skills standards for 2025-2030. Akademia embraces the point of view that upon completion of a qualification(s), the ideal student will be excellently trained in a specific area of expertise as well as formed into a well-rounded (gebildete) person. This means that a holistic, wholesome approach is followed when contemplating the preferred characteristics of the graduating Akademia student. By embracing a whole approach, the importance of the context, determination of requirements, legislation, strategic guidelines and the economic environment within and outside the operational environment is highlighted.

With a holistic approach a student is formed as a whole and thus includes the cognitive, affective and skills dimensions. This involves that the roadmap of the Akademia student should be considered, and the difference between the training and formation at Akademia should be aligned.

1.1 Roadmap

Akademia embraces the point of view that the ideal roadmap that students should complete, will be characterised by a spiral. Furthermore, the circle involves that the spiral of the two alternative roadmaps must be distinguished from, namely the circular journey and the linear journey.

1.1.1 THE SPIRAL

During his/her studies at Akademia the student goes through a journey that extends in a dialogical manner from the intellectual sources of Akademia from the past to the future. With the sources from the past there is a specific reference to the sources of 'faith', 'thought' and 'law' (briefly summarised in the three antique cities, Jerusalem, Athens and Rome).

The dialogical journey between the past and the future shows the structure of a spiral because the journey is not finished as a closed circle, but rather a dialogical, open and unfinished journey. Time and again, on and through the journey from the past to the future there is a return to the intellectual sources (or a dialogue with it), and in such a way that the understanding and the lifeworld of the students is further broadened and expanded. In the spirallike journey, the beginning of the journey (our intellectual sources) are not just repeated, but our insight into it is expanded, broadened and also critically 'opened'.

At the heart the spiral journey is a dialogue, the Socratic discussion and the unfinished search for the truth, the beauty and the goodness of reality. After completing their qualification(s), the Akademia student is committed to a lifelong (unfinished) journey on the way to the true, the beauteous and the good.

1.1.2 THE CIRCULAR JOURNEY

With a circular journey there is a reference to the roadmap where the student will simply return to the starting point upon completion of his/her qualification. This means a journey where the end and start point correlates completely. The circular journey is a finished journey. (Note: In contrast, the spirallike journey is a circular journey where the start and end points do not join, but rather pass each other in the adventure of humanity).

1.1.3 THE LINEAR JOURNEY

In terms of the linear concept the student departs in a linear manner from the traditional sources (as well as the tradition, community and country from which he/she comes) when he/she completes their studies. As the foundation for this linear journey there is an emphasis on the idea of Wendell Berry in his critique of the neoliberal universities, namely that the latter is committed to the "upward mobility" of the student in his/her career. In terms of this view no spirallike and deepened return to the sources and eventually the service to the community and the country is possible, but rather a linear departure from it.

With his preference for the spirallike roadmap of the student, Akademia avoids the finished circle as well the straight line. In short, with his emphasis on the spirallike roadmap, Akademia delivers students that are exposed the the global "outside" world, and that returns to the inside world with the goal of participating in their career on a critical, unrestricted and full-fledged manner.

1.2 Training: focus on knowledge and skills

After completion of his/her qualification(s) at Akademia the student will be equipped to participate in a career in an excellent manner.

Knowledge and skills of the highest order at the heart of training. With a "trained student" Akademia refers to a student that has the necessary knowledge of and skills in his/her own discipline with a view of a successful and prosperous career.

1.3 Formation

With the ideal of formation, Akademia joins the age old ideal of Bildung to the modern universities. (The historical roots of Bildung stretches back to the Classical school of thought and schools with their emphasis on paideia). After completion of his/her studies, the Akademia student will be formed to, as a full-fledged (gebildete) person, play a role as a citizen in his/her community and country.

Formation or Bildung supposes that the person will always have to be formed "again" with regard to two cohesive themes, namely the practical and the theoretical. A formed person is both a practical and theoretically formed person.

1.3.1 PRACTICAL FORMATION

With practical formation there is reference to the importance of forming the student in an ethical manner (in his/her character).

How does character formation happen? In conjunction with the age-old tradition of virtue ethics, Akademia's point of view is that character formation happens in and through the practice of the cardinal virtues (faith, hope and love, but also justice, prudence, valour and abstinence).

Character formation by means of the virtues does not happen in an institutional vacuum. Institutions are the condition for meaningful character formation. In conjunction with the insight of virtue-ethics is the importance of a "participation to institutions" as the place or topos where character formation happens the best, Akademia's point of view is that character formation mainly happens when participating in the academic and student life. After completion of a qualification(s) the student at Akademia will have a proven record of participation in the academic and student life.

1.3.2 THEORETICAL FORMATION

Because of his/her training the student at Akademia has excellent knowledge and skills in his/her specific discipline. Theoretical formation encompasses the concepts "insight" and "wisdom"

With the theoretical formation of the Akademia student, he/she is able to show insight in the relationships between the different disciplines and between various fields of knowledge. In other words, with the theoretical formation the Akademia student is able to see the "whole" (the "bigger" picture). In conjunction the Classical thoughts of Plato and Aristoteles: Akademia strives to deliver students that have "wisdom". According to Plato and Aristotle the latter does not refer to knowledge, but to the unfinished, dialogical and Socratic search until the end of the intellectual journey, namely the true, the beauteous and the good.

"Wisdom" as ideal does not stand in contrast to 'knowledge' and 'skills' in the specific discipline. On the contrary, the ideal of wisdom contributes to a strengthening of an Akademia student in his/her knowledge and skills.

In short, Akademia enables his students to engage in the endless adventure of the intellectual life by means of theoretical formation (summarised in the Socratic discussion). Insight and wisdom are a never-ending task.

1.4 Skills standards, critique and development outcomes

On international level the Deloitte report on education needs, in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), refer to what is known as soft skills. The importance of creativity, complex problem solving, inter and intrapersonal relationships, communication, emotional intelligence and critical thoughts is also included in the employability lists. The latter is grounded on research that was undertaken by World Bank and World Economic Forum. Further identified traits are resilience, adaptability, and ingenuity that are associated with executive functions (Note: It is important for Akademia to, amid the emphasis on ingenuity and adaptability, also place emphasis on the issue of grounded and profound thoughts).

On national level, Higher Education of South Africa's (HESA) (now Universities South Africa (USAf)) pilot survey to evaluate the points of view and expectations of employers and their evaluation of the quality of graduates that South African higher education institutions deliver (Parker & Griesel, 2009) rendered significant similarities with international investigations. The goal of South African Qualifications Authority's (SAQA) reference to critical cross-cultural outcomes (CCO) articulate that generic abilities are to develop students holistically. The critical and developmental outcomes are a list of outcomes that are derived from the Constitution and contained in the South African Qualification Authority Act (1995). The critique of cross-cultural outcomes include the following, to:

identify problems and find solutions	work effectively as a team
show insight in the world as a cohesive whole	communicate effectively
organise and manage on your own; gather, analyse, organise information and critically evaluate it	apply science and technology effectively and critically

Further documents that clarify the development of these traits are the CHE's presentation at the Quality Assurance Forum for Professional Bodies that refers to traits and employability of graduates (Coetzee, 2012).

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[1] Deloitte Global and the Global Business Coalition for Education. 2018. Preparing tomorrow's workforce for the Fourth Industrial Revolution | For business: A framework for action. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/gx-preparing-tomorrow-workforce-for-4IR.pdf

[2] Griesel, H & Parker, B. 2009. Graduate Attributes a baseline study on South African graduates from the perspective of employers. Higher Education South Africa & the South African Qualifications Authority. http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/genpubs/2009/graduate_attributes.pdf

[3] Coetzee, M. 2012. Graduate attributes and employability in curriculum and assessment design. CHE (Council on Higher Education). Quality Assurance Forum for Professional Bodies, 12 September 2012 https://www.che.ac.za/publications/graduate-attributes-and-employability-curriculum-and-assessment-design

1.5 Student traits as point of departure in programme development

From the preceding, it is clear that the traits of graduates are more than expertise or technical knowledge that form the core of the programme. Including these traits ensure that students develop skills that prepare them for the working environment. To be a graduate from a higher education institution, gives meaning to how a student learns, develops and approaches the world around him/her. Central to Akademia's classical education, is the premise that students are not just experts within a certain subject discipline, but that they will also have insight into the entirety of things: Based on classical education this insight relates to the strive toward wisdom and directs it in the preferred traits of an Akademia graduate.

The preferred traits of a graduate is important in the programme development and planning of the supportive curricula. Integration of generic traits in the curriculum ensures that students develop skills that equip them for the labour market and life in general to act as responsible community members. Most higher education institutions focus on the development of these characteristics, at both national and international level, most common on leadership, responsibility, personal integrity, empathy, respect for others, liability and self-regulation. Simultaneously it is important for Akademia, in conjunction with the ideal of character formation, to cultivate the old and cardinal virtues among students. The virtue in question is faith, hope and love, but also the good judgement, justice, valour and abstinence.

Central to the framework of programme development at Akademia is Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1995) ecological theory that refer to education and learning with the emphasis on the development of the individual as a fully rounded, skilled member of society. This development psychology with a dynamic relationship between person and context as underpinning is connected to qualification, teaching and learning programmes, as well as alignment with assumed outcomes. (Note: Learning outcomes are statements of learning achievement that are expressed according to what you can expect students to know, understand and be able to do by completing a learning unit or programme. This is an integral part of the module design. Learning outcomes are aligned with preferred graduate characteristics.)

The embracing of a holistic approach requires the application of common reflection to make sense of the reality as wholesome (Marshal, 2016:221).

WITH REGARD TO MAKING SENSE, THE WORK OF KARL WIECK (1995) IS USEFUL:

Identity and identification are central – what people think they are in essence in their context, forms how they act and how they interpret their events and react to that (Pratt, 2000; Currie & Brown, 2003; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005; Thurlow & Mills, 2009; Watson, 2009).

Retrospection and reflection give the opportunity to make sense (Dunford & Jones, 2000; Gephart, 1993).

The interpretation of the environment happens through the dialogical and the narrative (Bruner, 1991; Watson, 1998; Currie & Brown, 2003). Dialogue and narrative help people to think, organise, but also to manage and predict events on a thorough manner (Isabella, 1990; Weick, 1995; Abolafia, 2010).

Making sense is a social activity with stories that can be shared (Maitlis, 2005).
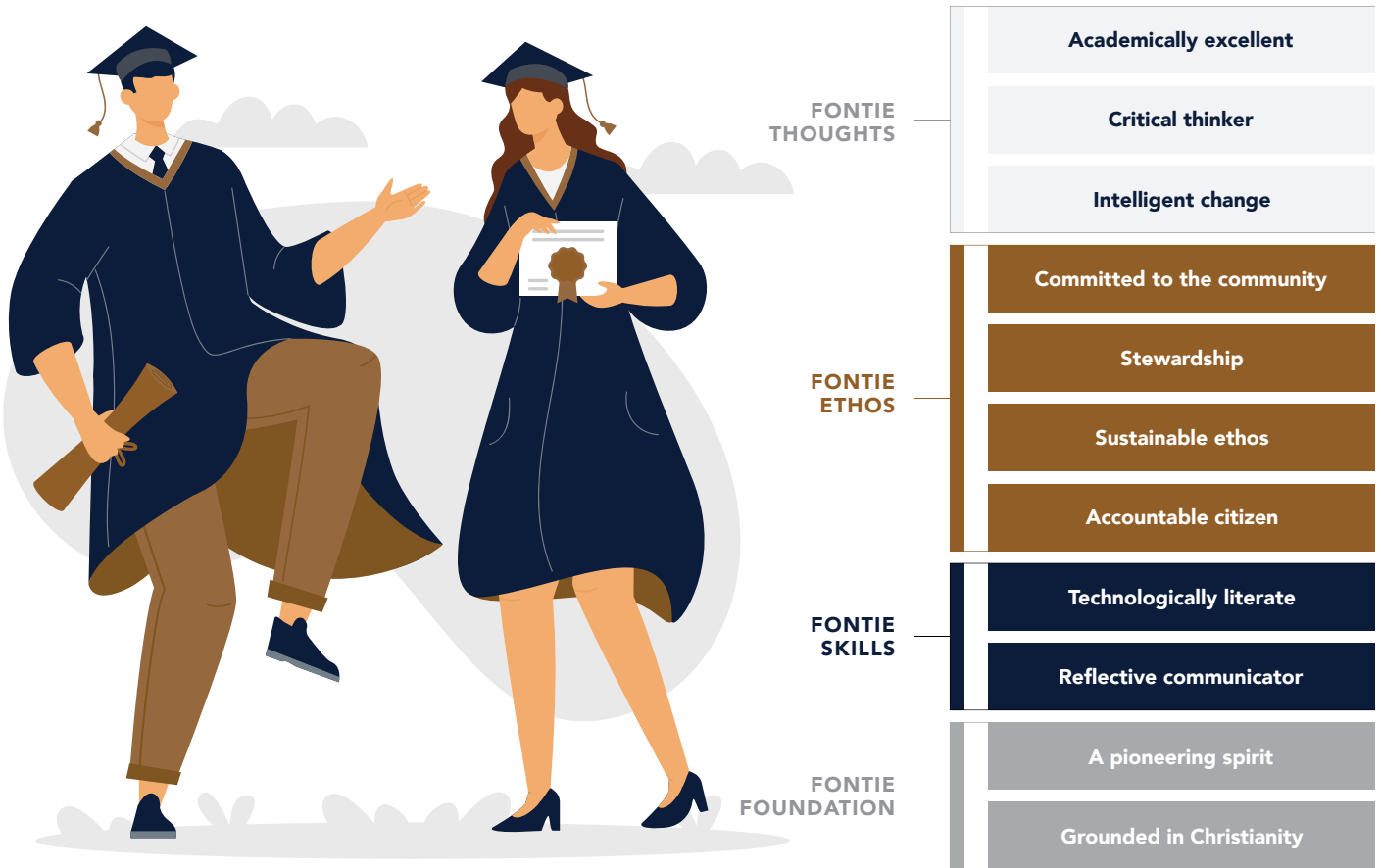
Making sense is continuous. Individuals weigh the consequences and the accuracy of their experience of the surrounding context repeatedly, that culminates to ongoing feedback and rescheduling (Thurlow & Mills, 2009).

Clues of the historical contexts help in relevant decision-making. That means that clues can become the point of reference to establish wider meaning networks and create deeper meaning (Brown, Stacey, & Nandhakumar, 2007; Weick 1995: 50).

Deborah Ancona (2012) refers to a dimension of how to make sense of the impact of the wider environment by creating a mind map, to function within the own context and environment and in this way learn of the environment and historical context.

Suggested preferred characteristics of an Akademia graduate at institutional level:

Student profile of an Akademia Fontie

FONTIE THOUGHTS
- Academically excellent
- Critical thinker
- Intelligent change

FONTIE ETHOS
- Committed to the community
- Stewardship
- Sustainable ethos
- Accountable citizen

FONTIE SKILLS
- Technologically literate
- Reflective communicator

FONTIE FOUNDATION
- A pioneering spirit
- Grounded in Christianity

Academically excellent	To strive for the continuous improvement of knowledge and skills from a strong academic foundation in a self-motivated and self-regulated way.
Grounded in Christianity	To be called to be a "light to the world" through your career in a fair, loving and hopeful manner.
A pioneering spirit	To initiate and lead development in your career in a selfless, assertive and futuristic-thinking manner.
Committed to the community	To serve with appreciation and respect for the social and cultural diversity in our country in a critical-dialogical and self-evaluative manner.
Critical thinker	The ability to achieve improvement by analysing, evaluating and finding innovative solutions to complex problems.
Technologically literate	The ability to evaluate, in an ethically correct manner, the credibility and reliability of gathered data and information through technology and to make an informed choice.

Intelligent change	The ability to lead change in a team and situations in an optimally effective way through active awareness of the appropriate leadership change style
Stewardship	To apply academically gained discipline knowledge and skills to preserve our heritage from the past in a morally fitting manner, if necessary.
Accountable citizen	To stand up for your fellow human in the context of hardship and communicate your way of doing in a fair manner.
Sustainable ethos	To motivate improvement and sustainability of the environment and social responsibility in an ethically correct manner.
Reflective communicator	The ability to communicate in a conscious and purposeful manner with consideration of own prejudices and assumptions to accomplish productive interaction.

Akademia therefore attempts to deliver graduates that are:

Academically excellent ‖ *This involves that the student*

- develops real rational thoughts through the Christian concept;
- has an understanding of a critical dialogical ethos and the necessity of the cultural 'transmission' between past and future;
- acquires encompassing knowledge of his/her specific discipline(s);
- develops a strong sense of academic integrity and reality of science;
- accepts critical thoughts and decision-making as part of the learning process;
- reaches an appropriate level of achievement in:

    * language skill, through the own mother tongue to master other languages and achieve in them, and
    * achieve reading and writing, problem solving, communication and general research activities.

- becomes skilled with regard to information and communication technology; and
- develops cognitive and analytical skills by means of different learning experiences that are flexible and transferable.

Emotionally intelligent and adaptable.

Self-motivated, self-regulated and self-directed.

Embracing of lifelong learning.

- experiences that faith and reason mutually supplement each other;

- gets an understanding of the social and cultural diversity in our country; and

- learns how to bring a love for the own culture and a respect for different cultures in relation to each other.

A responsible family member and community member, one who is open to greater reality (the whole of things).
This means that the student will

- be called to be a "light to the world" through their career;

- be of service to his or her community on a loyal-critical and introspective manner;

- be open and receptive to the wonder of the reality as a whole and ask on a critical dialogical manner about the nature and essence thereof;

- develop a critical appreciation for the global perspective on his/her chosen discipline(s);

- learn to accept social responsibility through a calling and service ethos;

- be able to work effectively as a team leader as well as a team member;

- develop effective negotiation skills;

- take note of the existing social, economic, political and environmental issues;

- encourage the improvement and sustainability of the environment; and

- respect human rights and consider ethical standards as important.

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