

ASSESSING NIGERIAN GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Popular opinion is that Nigerian graduates are generally not employable because they lack the required skills needed by the employers. Hence, the shortage of highly skilled personnel to meet employers' needs and the high rate of youth unemployment in the country. Meanwhile, various factors like unqualified lecturers, inadequacy of study facilities, employer discrimination and preference, poor funding and irrelevant curricula have been blamed as the reason for this anomaly.

This study is a descriptive survey of the perceptions of graduates and employers across fields of work on the employability of Nigerian graduates. The target population for the study included all Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions in Ibadan North Local Government Area. A purposive sampling technique was used to select graduate job seekers, graduate employees and employers of labour across major sectors who had interviewed and employed Nigerian graduates. Findings revealed that substantial percentage of the sampled respondents believed that the graduates were employable. Meanwhile, 35.9% actually disagreed that average interviewed employee had the needed skill to be employed. This paper therefore, concludes that Nigerian higher institutions, the private sector and government need to collaborate on a system to intensify exposure of Nigerian undergraduates to job- training schemes, the world of work, practical trainings and entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: *Employability, Nigerian Graduates*

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The term employability has remained a terminology that is increasingly gaining ground in the globe owing to the high level of unemployment among the people (labour force). According to Kazilan, Hamzah and Bakar (2009), they described employability in terms of employability skill. They stressed further that employability is a group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce.

The word "graduate" is used broadly in this study to refer to individuals with any form of post matriculation qualification or tertiary diploma or certificate (Pauw et al., 2008). In all modern economies, universities are places where specialized human resources are developed. Therefore, they play a crucial role in generating human capacities for leadership, management and the technical expertise. In the present day knowledge based economies that have emerged following globalization and information technology revolution, universities are expected to play a pivotal role by generating, harnessing and transmitting knowledge for sustainable development and improved standard of living. Unfortunately, it does appear that universities in Nigeria are yet to be equipped to carry out these responsibilities effectively due to limited access to university education and human capacity deficiencies. For example, Nigerian Institute of Personnel Management,

NIPM, (cited in Anho, 2011) noted that the quality of graduates from Nigerian Universities is declining rapidly. Anho also cited the report of National Employers Consultative Association (NECA) which decried the quality of Nigerian University graduates who they argue “do not meet the demands of industry”.

The problem of graduates’ employability remains a continuing policy priority for higher education (HE) policymakers in many economies. These concerns have been given renewed focus in the current climate of wider labour market uncertainty. Policymakers continue to emphasise the importance of ‘employability skills’ in order for graduates to be fully equipped in meeting the challenges of an increasingly flexible labour market. This study reviews some of the key empirical and conceptual themes in the area of graduate employability over the past decade in order to make sense of graduate employability as a policy issue. The current education system does not appear to be producing graduates with generic and essential skills, hence the continuous increase in the rate of youth unemployment. (Phillips Consulting, 2014)

It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the employability of Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions. This would help to further illuminate the views of employers and employees on the issue of graduate employability, factors that affect employability and how to address the issue to enhance employability. This paper is organized into four parts. The first describes why the issue of graduate employability is relevant in the world of work. The second is a review of the literature. The third is methods of research and tools used in the study. The last section provides concluding remarks based on the research, and areas for further study in the field.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What factors determine the employability of graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
- What are the employers’ perceived skills required of graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
- What is the extent to which possessed skills of Nigerian graduates differ from the required skills by employers?
- In what ways can the employability of Nigerian graduates be enhanced?

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The broad objective is to assess the employability of Nigerian graduates, using Ibadan North Local Government Area as a case study.

The specific objectives are:

- Identifying the factors that determine the employability of Nigerian graduates.
- Assessing the perception of graduate employees/job seekers and employers of labour on graduate employability.
- Analysing the extent to which Nigerian graduates are unemployable.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1:

H₀: The employability level of Nigerian Graduates is not significantly below standard.

H₁: The employability level of Nigerian Graduates is significantly below standard.

Hypothesis 2:

H₀: Possessed skills of Nigerian Graduates do not significantly determine their level of employability.

H₁: Possessed skills of Nigerian Graduates significantly determine their level of employability

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Employers of labour often complain that some of these graduates though professionally or technically qualified are unemployable, in that they lack the requisite, essential skills or competencies needed in the job for sustainable employment. These skills create a gap in their knowledge which must be filled to make them suitable to compete for few, existing vacancies that crop up from time to time. While most people view employability in absolute terms, focusing on the need for individuals to obtain credentials, knowledge and social status; the concept of employability can also be seen as subjective and dependent on contextual factors. Employability not only depends on whether one is able to fulfil the requirements of specific jobs, but also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers (Brown and Hesketh,2004).

In Nigeria, indications from past studies show that the high rate of unemployment experienced by university graduates is not only as a result of the unavailability of jobs, but also because of a dearth of candidates with employable skills that employers are looking for (Emeh et al. 2012; Pitan 2010, 2015). Taking the viewpoints of some employers of labour and Human Resources Managers, this study will also provide an insight into the needs of the employers, that is, what they want from their employees, identify and discuss the gaps in their knowledge with a view to recommending possible solutions to this problem. Also, the study will contribute to existing empirical knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employability: An Overview

As the interest in promoting graduate employability has increased, several studies have produced detailed breakdowns and taxonomies of particular skills and attributes required to promote graduate employability such as core skills; key skills; common skills; transferable skills; essential skills; functional skills; skills for life; generic skills and enterprise skills. This study encourages us to think of employability as an ongoing developmental process that doesn't stop once the graduate is employed. It is argued that employability is much more than the acquisition

of key skills or getting a job - it is about developing graduates as critical, empowered learner. Employability tends to have a variety of meanings in use, ranging from the employment rates of graduates from an institution to a characteristic of an individual graduate.

The topic of employability was discussed very much in detail by Baker & Henson (2010). They posit that employability skills have been explicitly addressed in university curricula within a form of regular classes or standalone courses; effectively an 'add-on' or 'bolt-on' component of educational programmes. In 2002 Glover described employability as an enhanced capacity to secure employment, to be familiar with theories on development. Later on as more research was conducted Kruss (2004) argued that employers expected that graduates be prepared for not only employment but employability. A shift was seen to be moving away from employment to employability (Harvey, 2001).

However, for McQuaid & Lindsay (2005) employability is much more complex phenomenon that reflects individual characteristics, personal circumstances and external factors, each of which may affect access to jobs. It was found that a range of factors – individual factors (employability skills and attributes, health and wellbeing, job seeking ability, demographic characteristics, adaptability and mobility), personal circumstances (household circumstances, access to resources, work culture) and external factors (demand factors in the labour market, policies on employment) determine employability. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005: 209-10)

Another school of thought argued that, employability is better understood as a social construct and stressed that to see it as only an individual issue was to miss important aspects of the concept (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Therefore, it is believed that employability is a responsibility shared more equally between: individuals who must be responsible for accepting the consequences of choices they make; businesses which, in employing a workforce and serving customers, inculcate particular values and attitudes as well as shaping behaviours. In many senses what makes "employability" is determined by employers.

According to Schreuder & Coetzee (2011:48) employability refers to an individual's capacity and willingness to become and remain attractive in the labour market, also the individual's capability to be successful in a wide range of jobs. It is about being capable of getting and creating and keeping fulfilling work and having the knowledge, understanding, skills, experience and personal attributes to move self-sufficiently within the labour market and to realise one's potential through sustainable and fulfilling employment experiences throughout the course of one's life. Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful. If employability is measured in the simplistic terms of whether or not a graduate has managed to secure a job within six months of graduating, it only provides a very vague and imprecise indication of what the student has gained. Questions need to be asked about whether or not the graduate is using the skills, knowledge and understanding gained in their degree studies in a "graduate level job", which in turn opens up a whole new debate about what exactly a "graduate level job" entails. There is so much more to employability than gaining employment, statistics often do not take into account the fact that some graduates may have taken lower level jobs in order to deal with financial pressures, particularly after incurring debts through their studies. Hillage and Pollard (1998, p. 2) suggest that: In simple terms, employability is about being capable

of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. They propose that employability consists of four main elements. The first of these, a person's "employability assets", consists of their knowledge, skills and attitudes. The second, "deployment", includes career management skills, including job search skills. Thirdly, "presentation" is concerned with "job getting skills", for example CV writing, work experience and interview techniques.

Factors Affecting the Employability of Nigerian Graduates.

Graduate capacities are influenced by learning experiences outside the university, particularly in the family and previous schooling. Second, a range of factors beyond one's employability attributes affect entry into employment, such as the availability of jobs, graduates' social networks, and possible discrimination. The interaction between these influential factors is not sufficiently well understood. Whether a graduate gets employed in six months from graduation depends on a range of factors including the graduate's age, gender and ethnicity as well as external economic factors, which may be sector- or region-specific, including the somewhat quirky recruitment practices of many employers.

Research shows that employers' perceptions about the quality of the graduates they employ, their employability and general work readiness continue to influence graduate transition into employment and their sustained ability to secure job in a turbulent and uncertain employment context (Brown & Scase, 1994; Cranmer, 2006; Griesel & Parker, 2009).

The problem of graduate employability and 'skills' may not so much centre on deficits on the part of graduates, but a graduate over-supply that employers find challenging to manage. Employers' propensities towards recruiting specific 'types' of graduates perhaps reflects deep-seated issues stemming from more transactional, cost-led and short-term approaches to developing human resources (Warhurst, 2008). Thus, graduates' successful integration in the labour market may rest less on the skills they possess before entering it, and more on the extent to which these are utilised and enriched through their actual participation in work settings.

Employers highlight the importance of previous work experience as a means for the student to mature and gain real life experience that only work can provide (Sleep & Reed, 2006). Work experiences were noted typically as internships, part time employment during college years, or summer jobs. The integration of experiential learning methods and work-related programs had a significant impact on the development of competencies resulting in a more "work ready" and a "more balanced graduate" (Coll & Zegwaard, 2006, p. 30).

Conceptual Nexus between Graduate Employability Skills and Labour Market Requirements

A skill is the ability to perform a task to a predefined level of competence. Skills are often divided into two types: transferable or generic skills which can be used across large numbers of different occupations, and vocational skills which are specific occupational or technical skills needed to work within an occupation or occupational group (Proctor & Dutta, 1995). Skills

mismatch is generally understood as various types of gaps or imbalances referring to skills, knowledge or competencies that may be of a quantitative or qualitative nature (Proctor & Dutta, 1995). It is the difference between the competence of the graduate and employers' expected competence needs. The various skills (generic skills) that employers now demand for in addition to academic skills are analytical, critical thinking, communication, entrepreneurial, decision making, IT (information technology), interpersonal, problem-solving, self-directed and numeracy skills.

In Coleman (2000:12) skills are broken down into three categories. There is Job skills which are the skills needed for a specific job. For example a mechanic needs to know how to fix faulty brakes and an accountant should be able to draw up a balance sheet. There are also adaptive skills, these skills help you function in a new situation, for example flexibility. They are enthusiasm, honesty and getting along well with people. Employers usually look for certain qualities and skills before hiring any staff member. These qualities and skills include punctuality, efficiency, and willingness to follow supervisor instructions, ability to get along with fellow workers, hard work and honesty.

Lastly there are transferable skills, these are personal abilities, characteristics or skills that transfer or can be used from one job or situation to another. For example interpersonal communication skills used in group work in class can be used to function effectively in a team in a work situation. In the workplace transferable skills are important. If you want to receive greater levels of responsibility and pay, having these transferable skills are crucial, meeting deadlines, supervising others, accepting responsibility, public speaking, solving problems, efficient planning, good budgeting and improving sales output. It will be beneficial to every job seeker in every profession to possess a balanced mix of these skills in order to succeed in the job market and to be employable and remain employable (Coleman.2000:12). Employability skills are sometimes referred to as professional, core, generic, key, and non-technical skills and are inherent to enhancing graduate work-readiness (Yorke & Knight, 2004). Employability skills typically considered important in developed economies are team working, communication, self-management, and analysis and critical thinking. (Jackson.2013:271)

Robles (2012:457) describes soft skills as character traits that enhance a person's interactions, job performance, and career prospects the greatest feature of soft skills is that they are intangible and are not discipline specific, that is the application of these skills is not limited to one's profession. Soft skills are continually developed through practical application during one's approach toward everyday life and the workplace, teachable graduates develop their soft skills quicker. Soft skills are not easily measurable like hard skills they are more of who we are than what we know and hard skills are those achievements that are included on a résumé, such as education, work experience, knowledge, and level of expertise. Examples of hard skills include job skills like typing, writing, math, reading, and the ability to use software programs.

Pop and Barkhuizen (2010: 76) suggest that the lack of soft skills, workplace readiness and practical experience are some of the challenges associated with employability. Soft skills, in particular, are the main reason why many graduates are unsuccessful in the recruitment phase. Examples of soft skills include friendliness, team spirit, team cohesiveness, understanding of different cultural and historical differences, motivation, observance of rules, procedures and

company etiquette, showing interest, problem solving skills, politeness, concise language, solid relations with diverse personality types, sociability, good interpersonal communication skills and similar traits. Hard skills are the technical expertise and knowledge needed for a job. Soft skills are interpersonal qualities, also known as people skills, and personal attributes that one possesses. The value of soft skills has been highlighted by a growing body of research and evidence over the past three decades. Soft skills have become an essential quality for managers to effectively manage their team and job in the corporate world irrespective of the sector. Along with professional qualification and domain knowledge, today's professionals need to possess a high soft skills quotient in order to succeed in this competitive era (Jessy, 2009). Hard skills contribute to only 15% of one's success, while the remaining 85% is contributed by soft skills (Watts and Watts, 2008). Research shows that individuals with good interpersonal and self-management abilities have better career success and contribute far more to their organizations rather than people with only excellent technical skills (Bush, 2012). (Samta, J. & Syed, A.A. 2013:32). Most employers value graduates who are willing to learn and the ability of a graduate to display this in the early days of their careers give them better chances at success than those who are not willing to learn. A graduate can be very intelligent and actually pass their degree with distinctions but if they do not display a fair amount of the necessary soft or generic skills they can jeopardise their chances of employability. Both sets of skills are essential for success, the only difference is hard skills or discipline specific skills can be learnt as opposed to soft skills that have been referred to as character skills, they are to an certain extent dependent on the personality types of individuals. Soft skills are very crucial and much research has shown that 75% of long-term job success depends on people skills, while only 25% is dependent on technical knowledge (Klaus, 2010). Another study indicated that hard skills contribute only 15% to one's success, whereas 85% of success is due to soft skills (Watts & Watts, 2008, as cited in John, 2009). As employers are progressively looking for employees who are mature and socially well adjusted, they rate soft skills as number one in importance for entry-level success on the job (Wilhelm, 2004).

Graduates especially those from university have high expectations after completion of their studies, the view is that their degrees should be able to open employment doors for them and they should not struggle like those who have lesser qualifications whereas employers feel that the return to employing a graduate is low, given that graduates require substantial on-the-job training before they provide any returns to the firm. It is necessary for graduates to have a more realistic view of what they can offer and what they can expect from their first jobs, given their limited experiential training (Pauw, Oosthuizen & Van Der Westhuizen.2008:56). The reality is that university graduates mostly have text book theoretical knowledge which is not supported by sufficient practical work experience in a country where the economy is not growing at a speed that allows for massive job creation projects, graduates find themselves faced with extended periods of unemployment.

Theoretical Framework

1. Human Capital Theory

The theoretical framework of this study can be explained by the Human Capital theory. This theory according to Schultz (1963) emphasizes the role of investment in education to boost economic and social achievement. Human capital theory equally suggests that education or training raised the productivity of workers by imparting useful life skills on the individuals. In line with the above, Becker (1962; 1964) believed that the height of workforce production have positive relationship with the educational and training form in which the higher the educational and training form a person gets, the higher the productivity/achievement of an individual. According to Lange and Topel (2004), a person with great skills will be able to increase employers or the workplace productivity. It is believed that by virtue of this theoretical framework, students need to possess employability skills that will enable them to function effectively and efficiently in the world of work.

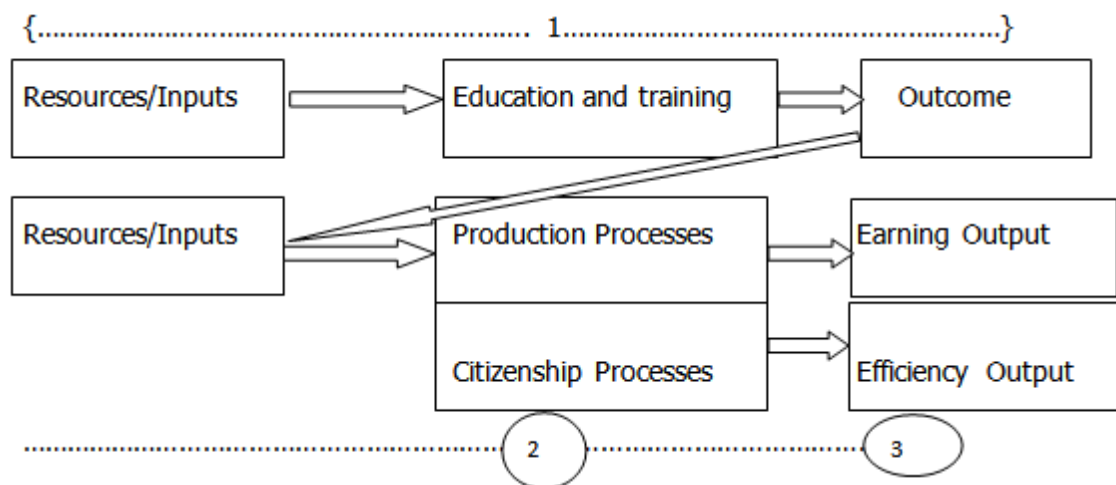


Figure 2. A model of Human Capital Theory (Swanson, 2001)

The diagrammatic representation of the human capital theory above presents the key relations in human capital theory. The first relationship 1 represents the concept of production as applied in education and training. This relationship means that investment in education and training results in increased learning (Imeokparia & Ediagbonya, 2012). The relationship 2 presents the relationship between learning and increased productivity. This means that increased learning can result to an increased productivity. This relationship emphasizes the human capital relationship that exists between increased productivity and increased wages and business learning. This relationship 3 pointed out that an increased productivity does result in increased waged for individuals. The human capital theory is a replicate of the human resource development theory which places emphasis on the investment in the training and development of human resources, therefore according to human capital theory, it can be concluded that when adequate resources are

committed to the development of human capital which is the stock of competencies, knowledge, habit, social and personality attributes of the society, the nation will witness growth and development. This theory is of relevance because when governments at all level are committed to the development of human capital through provision of qualitative education, the employability of Nigerian universities output will improve.

2. Conflict Theory

It emphasizes the fact that different groups, namely employer, academia, employees, have varying access to power and opportunities (Brown et al. 2003). In the capital-labour conflict there has been a continuous debate in terms of the employer's role in imparting generic skills and employees not acquiring adequate skills through training offered by employers. Meanwhile, there is the employer-academia conflict where the employers feel that the academia have not been providing adequate acquisition of generic skills to the graduates. The Conflict Theory argues for the employers to take responsibility in providing work place experience to the graduates and not directing the responsibilities to the universities alone. The consensus theory and the conflict theory have their own limitations in view of the historical evolution of generic skills acquisition, where not only university environment provides avenue for such skill development but it also entails pre-university environment such as school, family, social, neighbourhood and workplace (Selvadurai, et.al. 2012:296)

Empirical Review

Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong (2002) and Akerele and Opatola (2004) in their respective studies on the labour market for tertiary graduates in Ghana and Nigeria, found out that apart from the qualifications that graduates may possess, there are other attributes (non-academic skill requirements) which employers emphasize, such as good personal and social skills, analytical skills, good communication skills, technical and managerial skills, etc. Employers want workers who are already made to perform, because markets are becoming more competitive and because cost of on-the-job training is becoming prohibitive. They found out that about 50% of all jobs requiring university education and 30% of all jobs requiring at least, polytechnic diploma; they also require computing and analytical skills. Other researchers such as Dabalén, Oni and Adekola (2000) and National University Commission (2004), have also revealed that apart from the qualifications that graduates possess, there are other attributes (non-academic skill requirements) which employers of labour emphasize. Employers of labour force are not only interested in those having higher education but also practical skills appropriate for job fulfilment (Abiodun, 2010).

Asuquo Austin Effiong & Agboola Bolapeju Mary (2014) examined the employability of Nigerian Universities Outputs in the Labour markers in South-South, Nigeria. The findings revealed that the employability of Nigerian Universities outputs is low and the rating of these Universities outputs were insignificantly different with respects to their sex, type of organization where they work (public or private) and their educational qualification. By implication, regardless of the demographics of the respondents, the employability of Nigerian Universities Outputs was recorded to be low. This result is so because graduate employability which is a measure of skills,

knowledge acquired is based on their ability, quality of instruction and type of curriculum rather sex, type of organisation or academic qualifications.

Adebakin, Azeez B, Ajadi, O. Timothy & Subair, S. Tayo (2015) revealed in their study that skills required of university graduates as perceived by employers were analytic and problem solving (98%), decision-making (98.3%), risk management (96.7%), leadership (98%), information and communication (97.7%), team-work (99%), official communication (97.7%), and English proficiency and literacy skills (97%) while skills possessed by university graduates were English proficiency and literacy (58%) and information and communication skills (53%). These results showed disparity in both the employers required skills and those possessed by the university graduates.

Malaysian Today (2005) revealed the result of a survey conducted by Malaysian government on university graduates' employability skills and found that about 60,000 Malaysian graduates were unemployed because of lack of experience, poor English communication skills and study of courses that are not relevant to the market needs. In the same vein, Pauw, Oosthuizen and Westhuizen (2008) found that in South Africa, many university graduates were not employed because they lack soft skills and work place readiness. So also in Ghana, Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong (2002) found that employers often reject university graduates who lack the basic skills to complete simple routine assignments.

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

The study is a descriptive survey research designed to examine the employability of Nigerian Graduates in Ibadan Metropolis. This design was adopted because the researcher intends to get information as well as the expression of opinion of the target interest group from the sample of the population by the use of questionnaire. This is in line with Olayiwola (2007) who stated that survey research design is used to describe a given state of affairs. The research will therefore seek the views of selected employers of labour and graduates on employability in some selected sectors of the economy.

Area of the Study

Area of the study covered Ibadan Metropolis. Ibadan North Local Government Area of Ibadan was the focus for the purpose of the study. The choice of the area was because it houses academic institutions, banks, health institutions, research organisations, hotels, media houses, telecommunication companies and manufacturing industries; which all fall into the dominant sectors of the economy and are suitable for the purpose of this study.

Participants

The participants of the study comprised of 45 selected employers of labour from dominant sectors in the Nigerian economy. They are: Health, Education, Banking, Agriculture and Agro allied services, Manufacturing/Production, Oil & Allied Companies, Hospitality, I.T & Related

Services, Media & Communication, Human Resources Management, Engineering, Insurance, and Event Management. These are the most prominent sectors for recruitment of graduates. It also comprised of 157 Graduates who fall into the category of working class or currently job seeking or have previous work experience; to incorporate the views of the employees on employability. Therefore, population of the study was (202).

Sampling Method

In order to achieve the research objectives, purposive sampling technique also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling was employed. It is a type of non-probabilistic sampling that relies on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units that are to be studied. Therefore, the sampling technique was used to draw one hundred and fifty-seven (157) sampled employees who were administered with the employee questionnaires and forty-five (45) sampled employers were administered with the employer questionnaires. The group was chosen because they are all in the labour market whether employed or unemployed and so will be better poised to supply answers to the questionnaire. This will also help to proffer response and justification to the employability questions on Nigerian graduates from a broad perspective.

Sources of Data

Two sets of well-structured questionnaire, a primary source of data collection were employed for the purpose of this study. The questionnaire was targeted at knowing both the employees' and employers' views on the employability of Nigerian graduates thus, the questionnaires will be administered to the targeted sample. Meanwhile, a pre-test of the questionnaire was carried out in order to have a robust set of questions to get the anticipated result.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher administered the questionnaire electronically through the online google forms. The emails of the respondents were obtained after pre-notifying them about the questionnaire with a brief description of the researcher's objective. This process was straightforward and user friendly because the respondents only require internet connection to fill the questionnaire and could be done using their individual smartphones.

Data Analysis

This study was analysed using SPSS statistical instrument. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, graph, correlation analysis and chi-square statistics were employed. This method of analysis helped the researcher to present the data in a more meaningful way, which allows simpler interpretation of the data for easy assimilation for people without the knowledge of statistics.

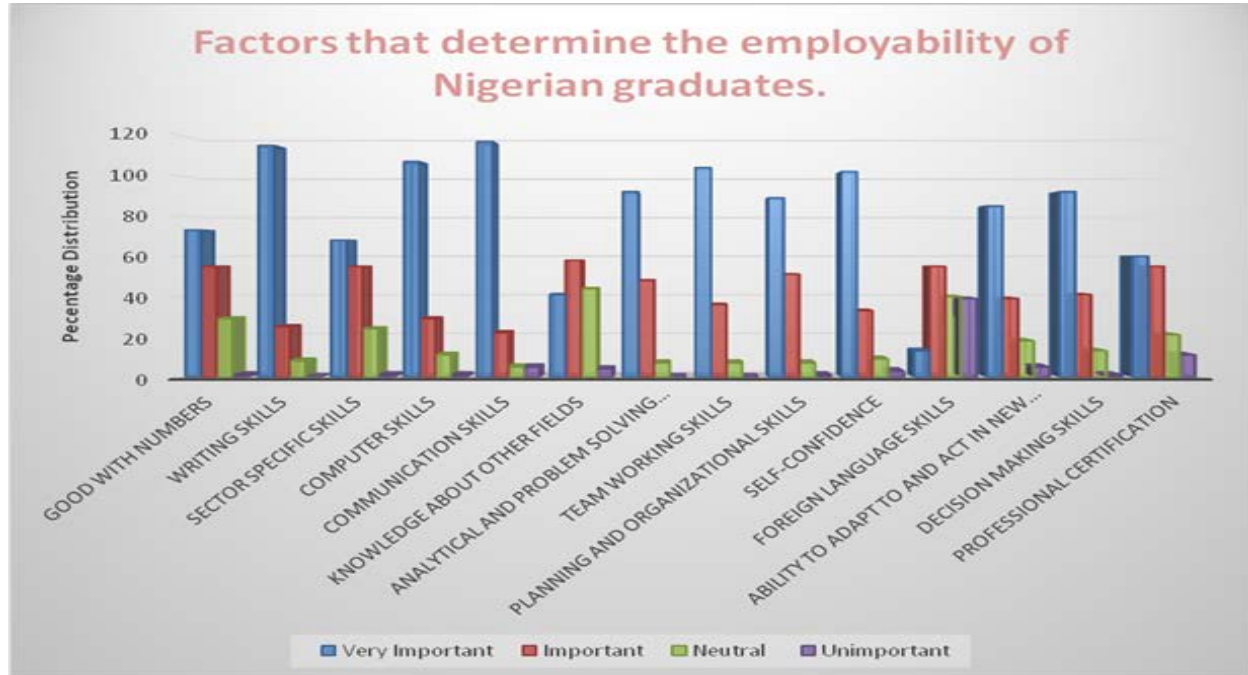
Validation of Study Instrument

Scholars in the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, University of Ibadan, Nigeria assessed the Questionnaire for content validity. The researcher also did a pre-test of the study instrument through a pilot study and ensured that the study instrument was usable and preferable to elicit the needed information from the study participants.

RESULTS

The first objective of this study was to identify the factors that determine the employability of Nigerian graduates in Ibadan. Data analysis and interpretation revealed that Good with numbers, Good reading/writing skills, Foreign Language, Self-confidence, Computer skills, Sector specific skills, Communication skills, Professional certification, Knowledge about other fields, Analytical and problem solving skills, Ability to adapt and act in new situations, Decision making skills, Team working skills, Planning and organizational skills were variables employers took into consideration before recruiting Nigerian graduates. However, results showed that both employers and employees were in sync about variables such as good with numbers, communication skills, decision making skills, sector specific skills and team working skills. They both rated them as highly important in determining employability. Results from correlation analysis also revealed that variables such as being good with numbers ($r = 0.36$; $P < 0.05$), sector specific skills ($r = 0.40$ $P < 0.05$), communication skills ($r = 0.35$; $P < 0.05$), decision making skills ($r = 0.33$; $P < 0.05$) and team working skills ($r = 0.35$; $P < 0.05$) were significant. However, other skills which the employers rated as important such as Good reading/writing skills, Self-confidence, Computer skills, Analytical and problem solving skills, Ability to adapt and act in new situations and Planning and organizational skills which employees did not rate as highly important as the other skills above will therefore affect graduate employability depending on the sector and employers' needs.

Figure 1 showing the rating of variables which influence graduate employability



Source: Field Survey, 2017

The second major objective of the study was to assess the perception of graduate employees/job seekers and employers of labour on graduate employability. The results revealed that 50.7% of the employees who participated in the study had undergone some form of training before becoming fully employed by their organization while 49.3% had not. Analysis showed also that 82.4% of the employees believed that additional skills will make them employable while 17.6% said otherwise.

Analysing the extent to which Nigerian graduates are unemployable was the third objective of this study. Results showed that 77.0% of the employers that filled the questionnaire agreed that average potential employee is employable while 23.0% of the respondents disagreed that average potential employee is employable. Analysis also revealed that majority of the respondents (64.1%) agreed that the employee had the needed skill to be employed. Meanwhile, 35.9% actually disagreed that average interviewed employee had the needed skill to be employed.

Table 1 Frequency distribution of respondents showing the average interviewed employees that had the needed skill

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	24	56.4
Strongly Agree	5	7.7
Disagree	16	35.9
Total	45	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 1 above reveals that majority of the respondents 64.1% agreed that the employee had the needed skill to be employed. Meanwhile, 35.9% actually disagreed that average interviewed employee had the needed skill to be employed.

Table 2 Frequency distribution of respondents based on percentage of interviewed/engaged employee that is employable

Variable	Frequency	Percent
1%-5%	0	0.0
6%-10%	4	7.7
11%-15%	6	12.8
16%-20%	5	10.3
21%-25%	9	20.5
26%-30%	4	7.7
31%-35%	3	7.7
36%-40%	4	10.3
41%-50%	6	12.8
Above 50%	4	10.3
Total	45	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 2 shows the estimation of the respondent based on the percentage of interviewed/engaged employees that were employable. A little over 20% of the respondents reported that between 21 and 25% of the employees interviewed/engaged were employable. At the same time, 12.8% and 10.3% revealed that between 41 and 50%; and above 50% respectively of the interviewed/engaged employees were employable.

Hypothesis 1:

H₀: The employability level of Nigerian Graduates is not significantly below standard.

H₁: The employability level of Nigerian Graduates is significantly below standard.

Decision

Analysis in the study revealed that majority of the respondents 64.1% agreed that the employees had the needed skill to be employed. Meanwhile, 35.9% actually disagreed that average interviewed employee had the needed skill to be employed. Based on this empirical result, we reject the null hypothesis that says that the employability of Nigerian graduates is significantly below standard.

Hypothesis 2:

H₀: Possessed skills of Nigerian Graduates do not significantly determine their level of employability.

H₁: Possessed skills of Nigerian Graduates significantly determine their level of employability

Decision

In the chi square results, ($\chi^2=0.131$; $p < 0.05$). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that possessed skills of Nigerian graduates significantly determine their level of employability.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis and interpretation in this study, it can be inferred that graduate employability level is not significantly below standard. Majority of the respondents agreed that graduates possessed the required skills to an extent satisfactory to the employers but in some cases not enough to make them acquire a specific job. Therefore, some other factors why some graduates are not able to obtain employment despite possessing some basic skills have been cited: Lack of work experience, lack of opportunities in field of study, not seeking employment, employers' preference, being 'under-qualified' or 'over-qualified'.

In line with the findings from this research, Anho (2011) evaluated the Quality and Employability of Graduates of Nigerian Universities. The findings from the study reveal that over 94 percent of the private sector employers perceived graduates of Nigerian Universities to be of high quality while 80 percent of the public sector employers perceive them as high quality. The study reveals that rating/perception of the private sector employers is higher than those of the public sector employers contrary to general views and previous literature which tend to suggest an overall low quality of the graduates (e.g. Onyeneye, 2006; Mafiana, Olarunde and Shaibu, 2005; Daniyan, et. al., 2005).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Graduate employability is a major concern to all stakeholders. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are pertinent to the advancement of graduate employability:

1. Employability skills should be taught as one of the topics in entrepreneurship studies or as a general course because when the curricula incorporates courses that would enhance graduate productivity at work, graduates of our tertiary institutions will be well-equipped to meet the challenges of the changing economy trend.
2. There should be periodic reviews of the curricula and programmes of tertiary institutions to make them relevant to existing gaps and responsive to changes in societal needs, labour market requirements, economic trends, rapid changes in information technology and globalization
3. The quality and scope of industrial training and other programmes geared at equipping the students with practical skills should be improved upon, it should not be limited to some certain courses as it is done currently in a lot of public universities.
4. There needs to be a collaboration among the employers, government and existing institutions of higher learning to research deeper into the issue of graduate employability to develop an effective mechanism set up to harmonise the activities of all the stakeholders.

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- i. Further research needs to be carried out on the part of employers' demand that is, labour market requirements and how to deepen graduate employability beyond the tertiary institutions.
- ii. Investigation into why graduates who possess basic skills or generic skills are still unable to secure good employment that is in line with their field of study
- iii. Assessment of the challenges facing the higher learning institutions in adapting employability strategies into their curricula
- iv. Research should be done to evaluate the suggestions made towards enhancing graduate employability to test its workability and make further modifications to fit into our peculiar situation in Nigeria.

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