

Technical Education and Graduates' Employability in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined the relevance of technical education to labour market requirements and its graduates' employability in Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. A sample of 4 public universities in the south west Nigeria that offer Technical Education was drawn using purposive sampling technique. While simple random sampling technique was used to select 5 lecturers in the department of Technical Education from the sampled universities. The study developed and used a questionnaire tagged "Technical Education & Graduate Employability Questionnaire (TEGEQ)" with a reliability coefficient of 0.83. Inferential statistic of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was employed to analyse the data and the null hypotheses developed for the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there was significant relationship between technical education and competencies required by potential employers; graduates' skills to progress within an enterprise; graduates' abilities to compete effectively in the job market. Finally, there was significant relationship between technical education and graduates' potentials to be self-employed. It is therefore recommended among others that Technical education needs to be given the necessary attention and support by Nigerian government so as to ensure it responds to the labour market needs as well as future manpower requirements.

Keywords: Skill Acquisition; Technical Education; Job Requirement; Competences; Unemployment.

Introduction

The high rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria has been blamed on the fact that most graduates from Nigerian universities are unemployable (Agu & Chiaha, 2013). Ochonma (2011) reported that about 2.8 million fresh graduates enter the labour market yearly and only 10% of these are gainfully employed. Considering the fact that these graduates constitute the most active segments of the population, their inability to find good jobs foretell serious danger for the country. Okoro (1993) attributed this high-level unemployment partly to the fact that people do not have the knowledge and skills that will enable them to take up the jobs that are available. He went further to say that, "while there are no jobs for the untrained, there are many jobs for the highly skilled. It has been said that Nigeria's development programmes are being hampered by lack of skilled technical personnel... in order to fill the vacancies that exist. It will also reduce unemployment in the country".

Unemployment is rampant in Nigeria like other nations because of mismatch between the need of employers and stock of job-specific human capital produced by educational training institutions (Simkovic, 2012). Therefore, nation's educational system needs to be tailored towards quality human capital development that would be employable all over the world. The emphasis of Nigeria institutions presently is on manpower production and development to manage the nation's public and private sectors. In Nigeria, most youths enroll in universities and other tertiary education programmes without due attention to the career prospects. On graduation, many of the graduates become unemployed because the skills acquired are dysfunctional and irrelevant to the labour demand (Okafor, 2011). The graduates should therefore be equipped with work driven skills that are related to the labour force whose professional responsibility is required to effectively perform in the dynamic and competitive world of work. No wonder Ogundele (2010) submitted that; "we need skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant. We need skilled people who can understand and adapts to changes in the increasing complexity of technology. We need people who can apply scientific knowledge to improve and proffer solution to environmental challenges for the use and conveniences of man" (p 10).

The Confederation of British Industry (2001) defined employability as being the possession by the individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers. The International Labour Organization (2000) discussed employability as “being a construct which: involves self-belief and an ability to secure and retain employment. It also means being able to improve ... the worker’s productivity and income-earning prospects. This often requires competing effectively in the job market and being able to move between occupations as necessary. It requires ‘learning to learn’ for new job opportunities” (p. 37). Some lists of generic employability skills have begun to accommodate notions of employability as encompassing more than short-term specific employment outcomes.

Technical education is a formal training that enables application of the techniques of applied sciences and mathematical principles for the services of humankind; it has bias in nurturing skills and practical development of an individual. (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) recommendations of 2002 on technical and vocational education and training for twenty-first Century had the following as objectives of technical vocational education and training:

1. to contribute to the achievement of the societal goals of greater democratization and social, cultural and economic development while at the same time developing the potential of all individuals both men and women for active participation in the establishment and implementation of the goals regardless of religion, race and age;
2. to lead to an understanding of the scientific and technological aspects of the contemporary civilization in such a way that people comprehend their environment and are capable of acting upon it while taking a critical view of the social, political and environmental implications of scientific and technological change, and
3. to empower people to contribute to environmentally sound sustainable development through their occupations and other areas of life (UNESCO & ILO, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Unemployment has become a major challenge facing the economy and well-being of many Nigerians today. There is no doubt that this problem has degenerated to the birth of various social vices in the country. It has been observed that many of Nigerian graduates are unemployable due to their inability to exhibit the labour market job requirement skills. Due to these problems the study examined the relevance of technical education as a course to labour market requirements and its graduates’ employability in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between technical education and graduates’ employability with the aim of using this study’s findings to make useful recommendations on how to enrich technical education curriculum towards unemployment eradication and graduates’ employability in Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were developed and tested in the study.

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates’ qualities and competencies required by potential employers.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates’ skills to progress within an enterprise.
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates’ abilities to compete effectively in the job market.
- Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates’ potentials to be self-employed.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used for the study. A sample of 4 public universities in the south west Nigeria that offer Technical Education was drawn using purposive sampling technique. While simple random sampling technique was used to select 5 lecturers in the department of Technical Education from the sampled universities namely: University of Lagos Akoka, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akoko-Akungba, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-ode. The study developed and used a questionnaire tagged “Technical Education and Graduate Employability Questionnaire (TEGEQ)” with correlation coefficient (r) of 0.84 and complimented with structured interview. The questionnaire has two sections; the first section elicits information on the respondents’ demographic data while the second section contains 20 items that solicit responses from the 20 lecturers on the sub-variables of the study. It was constructed on a 4-point Likert format ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation coefficient was employed to analyse the data, and the null hypotheses developed for the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

The results of the study are presented below according to the hypotheses developed for the study.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates’ qualities and competencies required by potential employers.

Table 1: Relationship between Technical Education and Graduates’ Qualities and Competencies Required by Potential Employers

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	r-cal.	r-tab.	P	Remark
Technical Education	20	19.4	15.5					
				18	0.501	0.468	0.05	Sig.
Graduates’ Qualities & Competencies Required by Potential Employers	20	21.2	17.9					

The result in table 1 above shows that the calculated r - value = 0.501 and the tabulated r - value = 0.468at 18 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated r - value is greater than the tabulated r - value. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that, there is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates’ qualities and competencies required by potential employers is rejected. So, there is significant relationship between technical education and graduates’ qualities and competencies required by potential employers.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates’ skills to progress within an enterprise.

Table 2: Relationship between Technical Education and Graduates’ Skills to Progress within an Enterprise

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	r-cal.	r-tab.	P	Remark
Technical Education	20	20.1	16.4					
				18	0.491	0.468	0.05	Sig.
Graduates’ Skills to Progress within an Enterprise	20	22.6	19.2					

The result in Table 2 above shows that the calculated r - value = 0.491 and the tabulated r - value = 0.468 at 18 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated r - value is greater than the tabulated r - value. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that, there is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates' skills to progress within an enterprise is rejected. So, there is significant relationship between technical education and graduates' skills to progress within an enterprise.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates' abilities to compete effectively in the job market.

Table 3: Relationship between Technical Education and Graduates' Abilities to Compete Effectively in the Job Market

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	r-cal.	r-tab.	P	Remark
Technical Education	20	23.3	19.6					
				18	0.509	0.468	0.05	Sig.
Graduates' Abilities to Compete Effectively in the Job Market	20	27.4	22.2					

The result in table 3 above shows that the calculated r - value = 0.509 and the tabulated r - value = 0.468 at 18 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated r - value is greater than the tabulated r - value. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that, there is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates' abilities to compete effectively in the job market is rejected. So, there is significant relationship between technical education and graduates' abilities to compete effectively in the job market.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates' potentials to be self-employed.

Table 4: Relationship between Technical Education and Graduates' Potentials to be Self-Employed

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	r-cal.	r-tab.	P	Remark
Technical Education	20	24.9	18.4					
				18	0.514	0.468	0.05	Sig.
Graduates' Potentials to be Self-employed	20	27.1	23.1					

The result in Table 4 above shows that the calculated r - value = 0.514 and the tabulated r - value = 0.468 at 18 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated r - value is greater than the tabulated r - value. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that, there is no significant relationship between technical education and graduates' potentials to be self-employed, is rejected. So, there is significant relationship between technical education and graduates' potentials to be self-employed.

Discussion of Findings

This study found that there is significant relationship between technical education and graduates' qualities and competencies required by potential employers; graduates' skills to progress within an enterprise; graduates' abilities to compete effectively in the job market; and finally, significant relationship between technical education and graduates' potentials to be self-employed. Skill is the ability and capability to handle a particular job well, the ability is usually gained or acquired through training or experience. These results indicate that Technical education being a course in any of the Nigerian universities should be able

to inculcate into her student's skills and abilities fit into the world of work and respond to the labour market requirements. Ogundele (2010) observed that skill acquisition help people already on a job; intending to work in any of the varieties of occupations needed by the society. There is no job that does not require its own skill for manpower development. The results of this present study are buttressed by Winer (2000), who claimed that technical education is a formal learning experience that shapes the technical skills, human abilities, cognitive understanding, attitudes and work habits of learners in order to fit into workplaces and enhance steady progress in employment. Okoro (1993) also corroborates these results with his submission that the skills acquired by students of technical education are expected to be utilised after graduation for self-employment or enhance their performance while working in the industry.

Conclusions

It is no gainsaying that Technical education enhances graduates' employability through inculcation of skills, qualities and competencies required by potential employers; and abilities to compete effectively in the job market. It does not prepare students to adequately fit into the world of work alone but also impart into its graduates' potentials to be self-employed. It is equally obvious that quality and functional Technical education enhances employment generation and contributes immensely the economic growth of the nation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffered based on the above findings of the study.

1. Technical education needs to be given the necessary attention and support by Nigerian government so as to ensure it responds to the labour market needs as well as future manpower requirements.
2. Technical education curriculum should be broadened to ensure that its students are equipped with relevant skills for the workforce.
3. Technical education in Nigerian institutions should be structured in a way that it will be practical skill-based training.
4. Industrial workers should be involved in the training of Technical education students in order to widen their knowledge in industrial job requirement skills. This will help in eradicating graduates' unemployment and build required self-reliance in the country.

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