

EVALUATION OF UNIVERSITY GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS COMPETENCE IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

Adedeji Israel Olusegun

Federal College of Education (Technical)

School of Education

Department of Educational Foundations, Gusau Zamfara State

Autor Email: segdeji2014@gmail.com/segdeji2000@yahoo.com

Abstract

One of the challenges facing university graduates is unemployability. This is because university graduates have generally been described as poorly-trained and are deficient in employability skills. Thus, this study evaluated university graduate employability skills competence in North-west, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to examine graduates' employability competence in communication, basic computer, analytical, entrepreneurial and interpersonal skills. A descriptive (survey) research design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select four states for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 306 out of 1,212 top management staff from educational, commercial, science and technology industries in the Selected States (Zamfara, Jigawa, Katsina and Kaduna). The instrument used for the study was a validated researcher-designed questionnaire with a test re-test reliability index of 0.89. Descriptive statistic of mean score was used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that the employability skills competence of university graduates in communication, analytical and entrepreneurial skills were low with mean scores of 1.86, 1.81 and 1.71, respectively; while basic computer and interpersonal skills were moderate (mean scores = 2.18 and 2.12, respectively). This study concluded that university graduates' employability skills competence level in North-west was low and the implication of this is that the Nigerian universities needed to focus more on developing graduates' employability skills. This study recommended that more emphasis should be placed on the employability skills competence of graduates and the curricular content of every area of specialisation should be reviewed to be more activity-based in meeting the skills required by employers of labour.

Keywords: Competence, employability, graduates, skills, university.

Introduction

Throughout the world, interest and investment in the university education is a basic segment of national growth effort. Nations today depend on information and capacities that are made in universities (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, 1996; World Bank, 1997). Being the nation's knowledge industry, the university builds the progressive capacity of the labour force. In the advanced countries, for instance, university's researchers screen ecumenical technological patterns, overview their significance to national needs and contribute to developing the national inventive capacity for economic advancement. As a result of the globalisation, information advancement and upset in the present-day learning-based economy, so much values have been set on universities in making, outfitting and disseminating information for sustainable development and improved way of life. Consequently, the university is a vital tool in engendering the human capacities for specialised activities. Categorically, universities are saddled with the obligation of

training high-level manpower within the setting of the needs and aspirations of the nation. Tertiary education in Nigeria (universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and mono technics) has been approved as a means of training human capital required for sustainable development.

The goals of the university education, as stated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), are to:

- i. contribute to national development through high level manpower training;
- ii. provide open and moderate quality learning opportunities in formal and casual training in the light of the needs and interests of all Nigerians;
- iii. provide high quality career counselling and long lasting learning programmes that prepare students with the information and aptitudes for self-dependence and the world of work;
- iv. reduce aptitude deficiencies through the development of skilled manpower relevant to the necessities of the labour market;
- v. advance and provide grant, entrepreneurship and community service;
- vi. forge and bond national unity and
- vii. promote national and international understanding and cooperation (p. 39).

Regardless of these noble goals, Sofoluwe and Etejere (2011) noticed that over the years the tertiary scholastic level has attracted underwhelming reactions, having fall short of providing the kind of education that would solve the problems of the country as a developing nation; such problems as abject poverty, corruption, unemployment and mismanagement of resources. This is traceable to the difficulties confronting the university education in Nigeria which are poor infrastructure, political influence, incessant industrial actions and underfunding. The issue of underfunding of education is so endemic that it has now encompassed series of other problems which include shortage of human and material assets (Durosaro, 2000). Other challenges are cultism, examination malpractices and poor quality of graduates.

Nigerian graduates have been depicted differently as half-baked, ill-equipped, ill-trained, of poor quality, of a low standard and unemployable (Obayan, 2002). This clarified why the university education in Nigeria has not been able to consummate its mandate of endangering the high-level manpower needed for the national development in the required quality that can fit and compete favourably both at local and world labour markets. Be that as it may, the recent perception is that the university education ought to develop in the recipient a certain number of employability aptitudes to a specific measure that will confirm the sustained ingenious efficiency of the individual. These skills, according to Obayan (2002), include:

- i. analytical power; this entails higher capacity for logical thinking, using right verbal, audio-visual, quantitative, sensory perceptions, graphic, documentary and other various tools.
- ii. communication; this includes oral and written as well as (in other possible forms) using the appropriate language and non-verbal forms in particular situations to attain specific goals.
- iii. problem-solving; refers to task one's analytical power to the peak in developing possible solution paths to the problem in a variety of situations.
- iv. team spirit; is working together with others in one form of group activities or another to get out of one's shell while remaining oneself.
- v. creativity; refers to the capacity to think ahead of the well-trodden path in reasoning as well as in action.

- vi. life-long learning skills; include perseverance, risk bearing, enquiry, reading habit, self-directed coordinated endeavour, the capacity to confront difficulties and so on (p. 4).

As reported by Oyesiku (2010), over the past seven years, the nation's capacity for job creation was low at an annual rate of five percent and seven percent. In the interim, about 213 tertiary institutions (Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education) in the country then produced over 300,000 graduates annually; a number that should usually meet the nation's human capital resource assets, however, employers are increasingly finding it difficult to attract skilled workers to fill the job vacancies. Federal Office of Statistics (2012) also reported that with the current unemployment rate at 23.9 percent and unemployed youth population put at 20.3 million, Nigeria produced about 4.5 million new entrants annually into the labour market.

Therefore, the Nigerian society today is facing challenges of getting the education that will deliver to the students the right set of skills and knowledge demanded by the labour market. The reality on the ground is that the university education should turn out students who are competent enough to fill available jobs in the marketplace. The National Universities Commission (2004) affirmed that the state of unemployment of Nigerian university graduates in the country is attributable to the disequilibrium between labour market requirements and essential employable skills by the graduates. However, contention subsists regarding what exactly constitutes what employers are requiring from graduates in the labour market. It was against this background that the researcher was interested in investigating the relationship between labour market core skills requirements and university graduate soft skills competence to identify the level of employability in North-west, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The trend of graduate unemployability has become an issue in the Nigeria labour market, especially for stakeholders like employers of labour, training institutions, parents and graduates. The Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA) (2005) expressed that companies were not recruiting but adopting employment protection strategies due to the very poor quality graduates who do not meet demands of captains of industries. Therefore, Chiacha and Amaechi (2013) carried out a study on entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in Nigeria. They discovered that the entrepreneurial education offered in schools did not lead to high employability index of graduates. Also, Pitan and Adedeji (2012) investigated the problem of skills mismatch and its prevalence in the Nigeria labour market. The study discovered that university graduates were not adequately competent in the skill demand of the labour market.

The National Bureau of Statistics (2011) reported that the rate of unemployment in Nigeria was high. The report revealed that the North-west recorded highest rate of unemployment with 25.40%, followed by South-west with 21.56%, North-east with 16.47%, South-south was 12.03%, while North-central had the lowest with 11.60%. This situation became more alarming in the third quarter of 2014 where North-west recorded 30.0%, North-east 23.9%, North-central 15.1%, South-east 8.9%, South-west 8.9% and South-south 18.7% (Ajaikaye, 2016).

The issue of unemployment is traceable to the employability knowledge-skill gap in the requirements of employers of labour from graduates. This gap, Kayode (2009) expressed, is responsible for the massive unemployment of graduates. Other researchers such as Dabalén, Oni and Adekola (2000), Mora (2008), Ajayi, Adeniji and Adu (2008), Pitan and Adedeji (2012) and Philips Consulting (2014). have carried out some researches on graduates' employability skills, unemployment, entrepreneurial human capital development, economic future of Nigerian graduates and labour market prospects of university graduates in

Nigeria but the gap identified by the researcher was that none of these mentioned researchers among others focused on labour market core skills requirements and university graduate soft skills competence for a relationship test in North-west geo-political zone of Nigeria. The researcher, therefore, considered it highly essential to investigate labour market core skills requirements and university graduate soft skills competence in North-west, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the university graduate employability skills competence in North-west, Nigeria. However, the specific purposes of the study were to:

1. assess the competence level of university graduate communication skills in North-west, Nigeria;
2. examine the competence level of university graduate basic computer skills in North-west, Nigeria;
3. determine the competence level of university graduate analytical skills in North-west, Nigeria;
4. examine the competence level of university graduate entrepreneurial skills in North-west, Nigeria and
5. examine the competence level of university graduate interpersonal skills in North-west, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. what is the competence level of university graduate communication skills in North-west, Nigeria?
2. what is the competence level of university graduate basic computer skills in North-west, Nigeria?
3. what is the competence level of university graduate analytical skills in North-west, Nigeria?
4. what is the competence level of university graduate entrepreneurial skills in North-west, Nigeria?
5. what is the competence level of university graduate interpersonal skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted suitable theory to explain certain existing graduate employability skills competence. The theory used in this study is the Human Capital Development Theory.

Human Capital Development Theory

Human capital theory was propounded by Schultz in 1963. As an economic theory, its assumption is premised on the supposition that education or training enhances the efficiency of workers and useful life skills of the people, all things being equal. The notion of human capital first emerged post-World War II when it was advanced that investments in health, training and education could explain levels of economic growth that investment in physical capital could not (Becker, 1963). One of the proponents of this theory, Becker believed that the height of workforce generation has positive relationship with the educational and training structure in which the higher the education and training a man gets, the higher the efficiency or achievements of an individual.

Therefore, the major task in the process of human capital development is to provide the educational system that would meet the changing labour market requirements so that the educational system would be able to produce labour force corresponding to the needs of the future economy development tendencies and orientation towards knowledge- based economy. This theory is very important and relevant to the current situation of developing nations like Nigeria where demand for labour is low due to the belief of some employers of labour that graduates are poorly trained and unemployable because they could not meet up with labour market requirements. Therefore, human capital development theory provides the premise upon which this study sought to evaluate university graduate employability skills in North-west, Nigeria.

This theory is very important and relevant to the current situation of developing nations like Nigeria where demand for labour is low due to the belief of some employers of labour that some graduates are poorly trained and unemployable because they could not meet up with labour market requirements due to soft skills mismatch.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study was a descriptive (survey) study. Best and Kahn (2005) maintained that correlational research design is an approach that seeks to establish relationship between two or more complex variables on the basis of the predictions made. Baba (2005) explained that this type of research design is used where the researcher studies the subjects at one time or within a specified period of time. Therefore, the correlational research design was considered appropriate and adopted to describe the university graduate employability skills competence as it existed in the North-west, Nigeria. Also, it allowed the researcher to make a careful collection of data in such a way that the information obtained from the representative sample of the target population was analysed for generalisation.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population for this study comprised Top Management Staff (TMS) in various institutions and organisations in North-west, Nigeria. The target population for the study consisted of 1,212 top management staff in Education, Banking, Commerce, Manufacturing, Science and Technology industries in the North-west, Nigeria (Field work, 2016). The top management staff in this study were directors at State Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), Teachers' Service Commission (TESCOM), States Ministry of Education, registrars in tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics and colleges of education) in the four selected states, bank managers, banks' heads of departments (operation and marketing), heads of departments (administrative, human resource, production and marketing) in commerce and industry as well as science and technology organisations. The selection of these management staff was based on the reason that they are operational managers who evaluate and assess university graduates who work directly under them.

The four states selected for the study were Zamfara, Jigawa, Kaduna and Katsina States. These states were selected for the study in the North-west zone because they recorded highest rates of unemployment: Zamfara: 42.6%, Jigawa, 35.9%, Kaduna, 30.3% and Katsina, 28.1% (Ajaikaye, 2016). The sample for the study comprised 306 top management staff members which were selected through the Research Advisors (2006) at 95% confidence level of 5.0% margin of error to determine the sample size of 306.

The sampling techniques used to select the sample for the study were the random and purposive sampling techniques. The simple random sampling technique was used (through balloting) to select seven banks out of 25 banks in the North-west, Nigeria. The technique

was also used to select four different organisations. Also, the purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants (top management staff members). This is because they are definite in number and as part of their responsibility, they perform the functions assessment and evaluation of university graduates working in their various organisations and institutions. This is as presented in Table 1:

Table 1
Sample Distribution of Participants

Industries	Population	Sample	Sampling Techniques
Banking	525	84	Purposive Sampling Technique
Commerce and Industries	224	64	Purposive Sampling Technique
Science and Technology	217	64	Purposive Sampling Technique
Education			
TESCOM	35	20	Purposive Sampling Technique
SUBEB	28	16	Purposive Sampling Technique
MOE			
Directors	45	9	Purposive Sampling Technique
Supervisors	104	25	Purposive Sampling Technique
Tertiary Institutions	24	24	Purposive Sampling Technique
		TMS	Purposive Sampling Technique
TOTAL	1212	306	TMS

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled “University Graduate Employability Skills Competence Questionnaire (UGESCQ)” consisted of 25 items drawn from the research questions raised for the study. In order to ensure the validity of the research instrument, copies of the draft of the instrument were given to five experts (the supervisor of the study, two experts in the Department of Educational Management and two experts from the field of Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria) for their comments on the face and content validity. Based on their comments and corrections, corrected copy was tested for reliability. The test re-test method of reliability was used. Copies of the questionnaire were administered in a State (Kebbi) that was not part of the sample of the study using 126 participants. The questionnaire was presented twice to the participants within an interval of four weeks. Responses from the two administrations of the questionnaire were analysed using the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation statistic. The overall value of .89 coefficient was obtained. This indicated that the instrument is reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analysed using the descriptive statistics of percentage, mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

Decision rule for this study is as follows:

Mean score from 4.1 – 5.0 was treated as “Very High”

Mean score from 3.1 – 4.0 was treated as “High”

Mean score from 2.1 – 3.0 was treated as “Moderate”

Mean score from 1.1 – 2.0 was treated as “Low”

Mean score from 0.1 – 1.0 was treated as “Very Low”.

Research Question 1: What is the competence level of university graduates’ communication skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 2:

The competence level of university graduates’ communication skills in North-west, Nigeria

S/N	Communication Skill	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1.	Free flow of oral communication	19	42	51	74	120	306	2.24	Moderate
2.	Memo Writing	-	6	12	68	220	306	1.36	Low
3.	Report Writing	4	8	11	43	240	306	1.34	Low
4.	Minutes Taking	14	21	21	42	208	306	1.66	Low
5.	Listening Skill	15	13	186	52	40	306	2.71	Moderate
Grand mean = 1.86		Low							

As shown in table 2, the participants indicated that the competence levels of the university graduates were moderate in free flow of oral communication in English Language and in listening skill with the mean scores of 2.24 and 2.71 respectively. However, the participants rated the competence level of university graduate memo writing, report writing and minutes taking skills as low with the mean scores of 1.36, 1.34 and 1.66 respectively. The grand mean generated from the data presented was 1.86. This implied that the competence level of the university graduates’ English Language communication skills was low. -

Research Question 6: What is the competence level of the university graduates’ basic computer skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 3:
The Competence Level of the University Graduates' Basic Computer Skills in North-

S/N	Basic Computer Skill	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1.	Word Processing	17	24	180	34	51	306	2.74	Moderate
2.	Spread Sheet	11	19	50	22	204	306	1.73	Low
3.	Statistical Packages	20	27	34	32	193	306	1.85	Low
4.	Presentation	12	25	30	67	172	306	1.81	Low
5.	Internet Skill	24	40	140	40	62	306	2.75	Moderate
Grand mean = 2.18		Moderate							

west, Nigeria

As shown in Table 3, the participants indicated that the competence levels of the university graduates' basic computer skills in North-west, Nigeria were moderate in word processing and internet skills with the mean scores of 2.74 and 2.75 respectively. However, the participants expressed that the competence levels of university graduates in spread sheet, statistical packages and presentation were low with the mean scores of 1.73, 1.85 and 1.81 respectively. The grand mean generated from the data presented was 2.18. This implied that the competence level of university graduates' basic computer skills in North-west, Nigeria was moderate.

Research Question 4: What is the competence level of the university graduates' analytical skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 4

The Competence Level of the University Graduates' Analytical Skills in North-west, Nigeria

S / N	Analytical Skill	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1	Problem handling skill	7	12	39	100	148	306	1.79	Low
2	Data Analysis	9	14	16	142	125	306	1.82	Low
3	Decision making skill	6	20	27	110	143	306	1.81	Low
4	Creative thinking	11	17	30	103	145	306	1.84	Low
5	Logical thinking	14	19	28	67	178	306	1.77	Low
Grand mean = 1.81		Low							

Table 4 revealed the mean ratings of the competence level of the university graduates' analytical skills. The participants indicated that the competence level of the university graduate problem handling skill was low with the mean score of 1.79, while their data analysis skill competence level was also low with the mean score of 1.82. The table also revealed that the university graduates' competence level in decision making, creative thinking and logical thinking skills were low with the mean scores of 1.81, 1.84 and 1.77 respectively. The grand mean of 1.81 was obtained implied that the competence level of the university graduates' analytical skills in North-west, Nigeria was low

Research Question 8: What is the competence level of the university graduates' entrepreneurial skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 5:

The Competence Level of the University Graduates' Entrepreneurial Skills in North-

S/N	Entrepreneurial Skill	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1.	Physical resources	13	11	33	58	191	306	1.68	Low
2.	Management	9	12	15	81	189	306	1.59	Low
3.	Financial	6	13	30	85	172	306	1.68	Low
4.	Management skill	15	20	18	149	104	306	1.99	Low
5.	Risk Management	4	11	19	98	174	306	1.60	Low
Planning Skill									
Innovative Skill									
Grand mean = 1.71		Low							

west, Nigeria

As shown in Table 5, the participants indicated that the competence levels of the university graduates in North-west, Nigeria were low in physical resources management and financial management skills with the mean scores of 1.68 and 1.59 respectively. Similarly, the participants expressed that the competence levels of the university graduate in risk management, planning and innovation skills were low with the mean scores of 1.68, 1.99 and 1.60 respectively. The grand mean generated from the data presented was 1.71. This implied that the competence level of university graduates' entrepreneurial skills in North-west was low.

Research Question 9: What is the competence level of the university graduates' interpersonal skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 6:
The Competence Level of the University Graduates' Interpersonal Skills in North-west, Nigeria

S/N	Interpersonal Skill	Very High	High	Mode rate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1.	Ability to interact with people	28	31	92	66	89	306	2.48	Moderate
2.	Participation as a team member	7	14	23	95	167	306	1.68	Low
		27	50	89	87	53	306	2.70	Moderate
3.	Work with colleagues	8	19	25	116	138	306	1.83	Low
4.	Level of Cooperation	14	25	20	111	136	306	1.92	Low
5.	Adherence to instruction								
Grand mean = 2.12		Moderate							

As revealed in Table 6, the participants indicated that the university graduates' competence levels in North-west, Nigeria were moderate in the ability to interact with people and working with colleagues as indicated with the mean scores of 2.48 and 2.70 respectively. However, the participants expressed that the competence levels of the university graduate skills in participating as a team member, level of cooperation as well as adherence to instruction were low with the mean scores of 1.68, 1.83 and 1.92 respectively. The grand mean generated from the data presented was 2.12. This implied that the competence level of university graduates' interpersonal skills was moderate in North-west, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on the Extent of Competence Level of the University Graduate Communication Skills in North-west, Nigeria

The findings on the extent of the competence level of the university graduate communication skills in North-west, Nigeria revealed that the competence level of graduates' English Language communication skills was low (mean = 1.86). This implied that graduate communication skills in English Language was not moderate enough as some of them (graduates) are still deficient in their communication skills especially oral and written skills. The plausible reasons for this could be as a result of the poor teaching and learning of the Use of English and Communication Skills in the university which has not been so much effective because the teaching of the course is theoretically-oriented with few number of periods in a congested learning environment. This made Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu (2005) to affirm that the content of these English courses are grossly inadequate for the students to acquire requisite skills in effective use of language for communication and for the give and take of social experience.

Findings on the Competence Level of the University Graduate Basic Computer Skills in North-west, Nigeria

The findings also revealed that the competence level of basic computer skills possessed by university graduates in North-west, Nigeria was moderate (mean = 2.18). This finding implied that graduates have effective display of basic computer skills in terms of Microsoft word, excel and presentation among others. This is based upon the realisation of the importance of information and communication technologies in the today's world of work.

The plausible reason why labour market requires basic computer skills from graduate is that the use of computer and other information and communication technologies are needed in every area of human endeavor irrespective of areas of specialisation because of its versatility, efficiency, precision as well helps in facilitating job process faster and enhancing better productivity. This therefore, makes it a must-have skill for every graduate for better advantage in the labour market.

This finding corroborates with Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003) that as a result of the new demand of the labour market, there has been a consistent global call for tertiary institutions to equip students with ICT skills by integrating the skills into their curriculum. This will enable students to adequately acquire and develop the employability skills needed throughout the course of their studies.

Findings on the Competence Level of the University Graduate Analytical Skills in North-west, Nigeria

Findings of this study further indicated that the competence level of analytical skills possessed by graduates in North-west was low (mean = 1.81). This means that, analytically, most graduates were deficient in decision making, logical and creative thinking. The plausible reason for this could be that there is a disconnect between knowledge acquisition and the reality of the world of work. This could be why graduates may not be able to apply correctly and appropriately the skills to the expectation of employers in finding solutions to the organisational challenges. This finding supported the findings of Philips Consulting (2014) that graduates underestimated the importance of the ability to think critically and analytically as they saw analytical skills as unimportant skills. This therefore explains reasons why employers of labour expressed a high level of dissatisfaction with this skill along with graduates' inability to work effectively on their own.

Findings on the Competence Level of the University Graduate Entrepreneurial Skills in North-West, Nigeria

Findings from this study shows that the competence level of graduate entrepreneurial skills in North-west, Nigeria was low (mean = 1.71). This implied that most graduates did not possess requisite competence skills necessary for job creation and self-reliance. This could be the plausible reason why many graduates are unemployable. As well, employers are looking for graduates who are business-driven and enterprising. When graduates are deficient of this, employers find it difficult to employ.

This finding supported Okebukola (2007) that most the Nigerian graduates were deficient in self-reliance and entrepreneurial skills while the type of education offered to them has constrained their entrepreneurial capability and their success in the world of business. Uche, Nwabueche and Ememe (2009) supported that university graduates lack entrepreneurial skills because they were taught theoretical knowledge without entrepreneurial skills. Akpan and Etor (2013) in support of Okebukola (2007) and Uche et al. (2009) affirmed that most graduates from the universities only acquire academic knowledge without entrepreneurial skills which would have enabled them to create jobs for themselves, others and contribute effectively towards national economic development.

Findings on the Competence Level of the University Graduate Interpersonal Skills in North-West, Nigeria

The findings on the competence level of interpersonal skills possessed by graduates in North-west, Nigeria revealed that the interpersonal skills possessed by graduates were

moderate (mean = 2.12). This finding shows that university graduates have moderate competence level and ability to interact with people and colleagues in getting things done. This finding supported McClellan (2001) that the university graduates must learn how to accept the people working in teams and working together on projects must adapt to each other in the workplace. Interpersonal skills enable graduates to work productively with people from different races, ages, cultures, genders and lifestyles (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). Personal attributes also help graduates to promote harmony and excellent working conditions (Aigbavboa & Aliu, 2017).

Conclusion

The competence level of the university graduate soft skills competence was low. Therefore, the university graduates in North-west did not possess adequately the required soft employability competence that will enhance their employability.

Recommendations

Based on the low competence level of graduate employability skills competence in North-west, Nigeria especially in communication, entrepreneurial and analytical skills as shown in this study, the following recommendations were made that:

1. more time should be allocated to the teaching and learning of the Use of English and Communication Skills. The teaching and learning of this course should be in practical (interactive) sessions in a more conducive learning condition especially by grouping students into moderate learning size of 20 per group;
2. more practical tasks on decision making, creative and logical thinking should be organised for undergraduate students periodically. It is hoped that this will help in inculcating and developing in graduates the ability to be analytical in the world of work.
3. entrepreneurship skills among the Nigerian university graduates should be enhanced the more by making all entrepreneurial or vocational centers in all the Nigerian universities more viable through activity or practical-based teaching and learning.

References

- Aduwa-Ogiegbean, S. E. & Iyamu, E. O. S. (2005). Using information and communication technology in secondary schools in Nigeria. *Educational Technology & Society* 8(1), 104-112.
- Aigbavboa, C. & Aliu, J. (2017). Requisite skills for graduate success: Perceptions of the Nigerian construction industry. *Socio-economica: The Scientific Journal for Theory and Practices of Socio-economic Development*. 6(11) 21 – 42.
- Ajaikaye, O. (2016). Challenges of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. A Presentation at the National Assembly Dialogue, Abuja. Nov 16-17, 2015
- Akpan, C. & Etor, C. (2013). University lecturers' perception of entrepreneurship education as an empowerment strategy for graduate self-employment in south-south, Nigeria. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*. 3(5,) 1180-1195

- Becker, G. A. (1962). Investment in human capital: A theoretical analysis. Columbia University and National Bureau of Economic Research. *Journal of Political Economy*, 5 (2), 9-49.
- Brown, P., Hesketh, A., & Williams, S. (2003). Employability in a knowledge-driven economy. *Journal of Education and Work*, 16(2), 107-126.
- Chiacha, G. T. U. & Amaechi, A. R. (2013). Entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in Nigeria. A paper presented at the General Conference organized by the Association of African Universities, Libreville.
- Dabalén, A. Oni, B. & Adekola, O. A. (2000). *Labour market prospects for university graduates in Nigeria*. The Nigeria University System Innovation Project Study.
- Durosaro, D. O (2000). Financing of education in Nigeria. In Ogunsaju, S. A. & Durosaro, D. O (Eds). *The craft of educational management*, Ilorin: Haytee press.
- Federal Office of Statistics Abuja. (2012). *Annual abstract of statistics*. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN)
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). *National policy on education*. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Jackson, D. (2015). Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: Barriers and best practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(2): 350-367. DOI:10.1080/03075079.2013.842221
- Kayode, A. (2009). *Bridging the skill gap in Nigeria: framework for dialogue between universities and employers of labour*: A keynote address at 24th conference of the Association of Vice Chancellors of Universities held at the University of Ilorin
- McClellan, M. (2001). *The role of higher education in market economy*. The United States Office, Pristina. Kosovio online.
- National Bureau of Statistics (2011). *Labour force survey*, February.
- National University Commission (2004): *Labour market expectations of Nigerian graduates*. Report of National Needs Assessment Surveys.
- Obayan, P. (2002). *Revitalizing education in Africa*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd.
- OECD (1996). *Reforms for an ageing society*. Paris: OECD.
- Okebukola, P. A. (2005). National University Commission to harmonise pre-degree programme. An address at a one-day workshop on minimum guidelines for the operation of non-degree programmes in the Nigerian University. *The Comet*, Monday 7
- Oyesiku, K. (2010). Synopsis of a colloquium on organized private sector /public service demand for Nigerian universities, colleges of education and polytechnic graduates' employability. Organized by Bureau of Tertiary Institutions, Abeokuta, Ogun State between 12th and 13th October

- Philips Consulting (2014). Education and employability survey report. From www.philipsconsulting.net.
- Pitan, O. S. & Adedeji, S. O. (2012). Skills mismatch among university graduates in the Nigeria labour market. *US-China Education Review*. 1 (1), 90-98.
- Sofoluwe, A. O. and Etejere, P. (2011). Tertiary education and entrepreneurship in Nigeria. *Journal of Research in Education*. 1 (1), 148-156.
- The Research Advisors (2006). *Sample size table*. <http://research-advisors.com>
- Uche, C. M., Nwabueze, A. I. & Eneme, O. N. (2009). Developing entrepreneurial skills among university students: a tool for achieving millennium development goals in south-south states of Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development*. 3(2) 54-64.
- World Bank (1997). *African development indicators*. Washington D. C.: The World Bank