



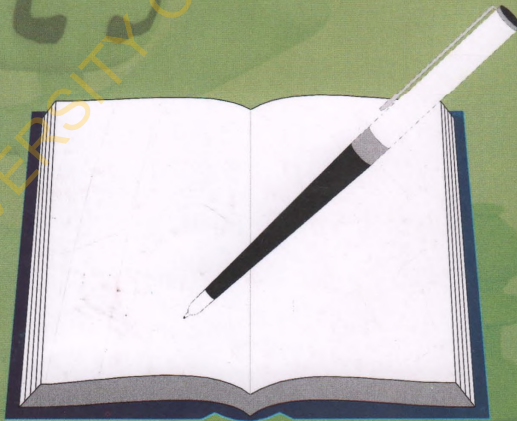
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The need for job creation through University Industrial collaboration in Nigeria

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Abstract

The rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria today has become very worrisome. Year after year, various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria turn out hundreds of graduates who storm the labour market in search of non-existing jobs. Those who are fortunate to get employment are often retrained by their establishments as some of them could hardly meet up the challenges of work. Many employers of labour in Nigeria often complain of graduate unemployability, stressing the need for collaboration between universities producing the graduates and the industries/establishment where they will work and earn a living. Also, some scholars subscribe to the opinion that such collaboration will increase the skills and productivity of university graduates in the work place. Hence, this paper dwells much on how universities and industrials can collaborate and create working situation that may facilitate graduate employability in the country.

Introduction

It is the hope of all who attend a university to get an employment on completion of their studies. The employments they receive provide university graduates with a means of responsible livelihood within the society. Operationally, university graduates in Nigeria are in two categories: those with various categories of first degrees from universities and colleges of educations affiliated to universities and holders of the Higher National Diploma (HND) from Polytechnics. University graduates are being produced by over one hundred and twenty government and privately owned higher institutions. Presently, higher institutions in Nigeria turn out graduates in their numbers. These graduates who are teeming, able-bodied young men and women storm the labour markets in search of unavailable or rather too few jobs upon the completion of the mandatory one year National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme. In this paper, attempt shall be made to establish the essence of university education after which we define unemployment and situate it in Nigeria and say how a synergy can be built and sustained between universities and industries to reduce unemployment rate in the country and increase graduate employability in the country.

The Essence Of University Education

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English defines a University as an institution at the highest level of education where one can study for a degree or do research. From this definition, the essence of university is for the acquisition of higher knowledge and most importantly research into the society's numerous problems. Research, according to Gay and Airasian (2000), is the systematic application of a family of methods that are employed to provide trustworthy information about problems. Iwuji, Ijoma and Ikediashi (2000) see research as a systematically controlled investigation of an event with the aim of understanding or verifying knowledge that will help the researcher achieve his purpose. The purpose of the researcher may be to solve an existing problem such as high unemployment rate or to provide knowledge for better living in the society. Nworgu (2006) posits that research has to do with an enquiry into the unknown ... a search for solutions to problems or answers to questions. To this end, the first essence of university education is to provide knowledge and solve society's problems.

University education also leads to specialization and professionalism. One is expected to specialize in a branch of knowledge upon completion of university education. Thus, one must be a teacher, lawyer, doctor, psychologist, broadcaster etc. upon completion of university education. Hence, university education is of essence in that it leads to specialization of knowledge and professionalism.

Another essence of university education is employment i.e. any person who successfully completed university education is expected to have a means of earning a living. University education provides one with a means of earning a living i.e. employment. A person is expected to acquire adequate skills to make him/her employable by organizations or to be self-employed. This means that a person is expected to acquire functional knowledge necessary for responsible living within the society.

Meaning and Types of Unemployment

Unemployment can be defined as a situation where people, both able-bodied and educated, stay without job and move in their numbers from industry to industry in search of paid jobs. Unemployment may also be seen as a situation where a reasonable percentage of a country's population, whether they are educated or not, able-bodied or physically challenged, are actively seeking for work (paid job) so that they could earn a living. The ILO describes an unemployed persons as those who are currently not working but are willing and able to work for pay, currently available for work, and have actively searched for work. The unemployment rate of a country is measured by dividing the unemployed population with the total labour force i.e. Several types of unemployment have been identified by O'Sullivan and Sheffrin (2003). They include

Structural Unemployment: Structural unemployment is the type of unemployment that occurs as a result of structural problems in the economy and inefficiencies that are inherent in the labour market. For instance, if an organization needs an economist and an accountant is supplied. This is a structural problem because accountants cannot do the job of economists effectively. Thus, economics professionals could become jobless while the organization faces risk of possible collapse. Structural

unemployment occurs when the labour market is unable to provide job for everyone who wants job because there is a mismatch between the skills of the unemployed workers and the skills needed for the available jobs. Structural unemployment lasts longer and has great effects on an economy.

Frictional Unemployment: This type of unemployment focuses on voluntary decisions of job seekers to work based on each job seeker's valuation of their own work and how that compares with current wage rates at the time plus the time and effort that is required to find a job. That is, the time period between searching for a job or transiting from one job to another. Frictional unemployment exists because both jobs and workers are different i.e. jobs and person specifications do not exactly match the persons that eventually perform them. Such a mismatch may be caused by differences in skills of job seekers, pay offered by job owners, hours to be spent at work daily, location of both job and its seekers, and several other factors. Hence, employers and employees usually reach a compromise before a job is offered and accepted.

Effects of Unemployment

Unemployment has far-reaching implications for both the individual and the society at large. An unemployed individual may be unable to meet up with his/her financial obligations such as payment of rent, children's fees etc. The individual is also at risk of malnutrition, decline in health and ultimately lost of self-esteem. When an individual loses his/her self-value and worth, depression sets in while suicide may be contemplated. At the level of society, unemployment increases crime rates in a country. When an individual is unemployed, such an individual may resort to committing crimes such as robbery and kidnapping just to have food on the table. A society where these crimes are high naturally has a dark image in the comity of nations i.e. the crimes can force existing industries to close down, while preventing foreign investments in the country. Hence, high unemployment rate increases when industries are forced to close down due to high crime rates because they must lay off employees if/when closing down.

Unemployment Rate In Nigeria

In July, 2013, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) puts Nigeria's unemployment rate at 23.90%. The figure is corroboratively put at 24%, 21% and 24% by the African Development Bank, The Heritage Foundation and The World Bank respectively. This level of unemployment is alarmingly very high. In spite of the high unemployment rate in Nigeria, all the higher institutions in the country continue to turn out an army of youth-graduates who join to populate the labour markets in search of almost non-existing jobs. In the ensuing situation, employers have consistently lamented lack of skills among the graduates which they employed as they have to constantly train and retrain them to meet job specifications and challenges. This situation is becoming over-bearing and increasingly very worrisome. Hence, the need for a collaborative synergy between universities and industries for the production of skilled manpower and to enhance job creation in the country.

Building University-industrial Collaboration In Nigeria.

University-Industrial collaboration in Nigeria is long over-due. Since the products of universities will retire to the industries to earn a living, there is need to build a collaborative synergy between Nigerian universities and industries in the country. This collaboration can be enhanced or built through the following actions:

1) Legislation: Given the unemployment rate in Nigeria and the reasons adduced by employers that most graduates are unemployable, the federal government through the National Assembly should enact appropriate laws to initiate a synergy between the universities and the industries in Nigeria. University authorities and captains of industries should be well represented in the enactment process. This legislation will engender university-industry collaboration and drastically reduce the rate of unemployment in Nigeria.

2) University Market Research: The universities and all categories of higher institutions in Nigeria should establish research offices. The research offices would have the responsibility of collecting job placements by various industries and analyzing the industry specifications of the skills to be possessed by the person to be employed. The job skill acquisitions will enable the universities to enrich their curriculum package and tailor it towards the production of skill-filled graduates that will be relevant and meet the challenges of employability by the industries. Aliyu (2008) observes that the modern university should ideally follow the market and be demand-driven. He adds that the university should be proactive in knowing the problems of the society and in generating and applying the knowledge relevant to the needs of the society.

3) Industry Job Specifications: Industries that employ graduates should have the boldness and courage to tell the universities the type of skills they expect in the graduates to be relevant for employability. This is to say that industries should keep universities abreast with the challenges they face as to enable the universities to research on the problems with a view to providing solutions that will remediate the challenges.

4) Graduate Skill Acquisition: a graduate who is unemployed for one year should take a second look at his/her self. Such a graduate should pay special attention to the skills for the job he/she is interested in and/or applying for. Thereafter, the graduate should make frantic personal effort to equip his/her self with the requisite skills so as to fit job vacancies of interest when such vacancies are announced.

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