



EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMMES FOR ENHANCED GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE.



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Abstract

The paper investigated the benefit of active participations in extra-curricular activities. the paper discussed a practical straightforward strategies applicable in enhancing the employability skills of graduates in the four walls of school which will position them to be successful in their choice of career. The paper presented a conceptual clarification that discussed different concepts which further explained the inclusion of these engaging topics to exposes the importance of extra-curriculum activities that improve the needed skills in the labour market by employers such as the benefits of extra-curriculum activities, a relevant and authentic students' experience, knowledgeable leadership role. The approach adopted was a model developed from existing research and the experience of other researchers. The paper discussed the leading role of extra-curriculum activities that it helps in developing skills, it improves self-confidence, It provides adequate information about the labour market and employers' expectations. Furthermore, the paper highlighted some employers' expectations skills such as, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, team working, exposure to new technology, and many more. The study revealed some extra-curricular activities programmes that also enhance, develop and improve the employability skills of graduates like industrial training, teaching practice, workshops, placement, sports, internships, clubs The paper presented the need for revalidating and revisiting to update the content of the curriculum by the tertiary institutions and curriculum planners. The study concluded that extra-curriculum activities that related to their discipline, helps graduates to develop new skills, knowledge and experience to enhance their employability skills that will make them employable. The paper suggested that work-based learning experience and internship should be incorporated into degree courses or academic curriculum.

Introduction

In addition to preparing its beneficiaries or learners to succeed in a competitive global economy, education also fosters personal growth and self-actualization. This helps individuals to achieve total development, equip with adequate competencies and attitudes required by corporate world. Hence, to combat the high unemployment rate and improve graduates' chances of finding work in their field of study, there are variety of obstacles that higher education institutions must overcome in order to provide their students with the skills and values valued by employers. Extra-curricular activity programmes enhancement in higher institutions will position graduates for success in their chosen fields of work, this should be one of the most important aims of schools and universities in preparing graduates for workforce. Extra-curricular activity programmes are vital instruments in capacity building for employability in terms of skills, and knowledge.

The purpose of this paper is to share learning process and ideas with the tertiary institutions about the concepts, approaches, tools, techniques required to develop graduates with employable skills and the needs for national policy makers to review the national curricular to include extra-curricular activities with academic programmes to enhance employability skills of graduates within the four walls of schools that will make them fit in the demands of employers in the labour market. One strategy to boost graduates' employability in accordance with industry requirement is to emphase work-life



competences and the vital skills needed for advancement of the company can only be acquire through extra-curricular activity programmes (Saleh and Rosli, 2019).

There is need for greater research on employability to guarantee that university curricular and graduates' employability are sufficient to satisfy the demand of employers in the corporate world despite the fact that much has been published on this issue. This is because measures to improve students' employability in higher education could be seen as reactions to policies mandating that students acquire skills in line with market demand.

The Role of Extra-curricular activities in enhancing the employability skills of graduates

It has been proven by many scholars that academic skills with students' active participations in extracurricular activities are important to employability there enhancing their cognitive, intellectual and psychomotor skills. Researchers have highlighted the role of extra-curriculum activities to improve skills and competencies as predictors of employability (Pool & Sewell, 2007). A new employee upon graduation is usually stressful because they lack job experience. However, understanding the role and active participation in extra-curriculum activities plays the following roles in enhancing the employability of students:

- It helps in developing skills
- It helps to improve employers' perceptions
- It improves self-efficacy
- It improves students' confidence in finding suitable job
- It keeps the students informed about the corporate world and employers' expectations
- It provides valid information on job strategies
- It facilitates the development of self-knowledge that are critical to a successful career journey, ie knowing how, why and whom

Improving Graduates' Employability

This study's would help tertiary institutions learn about strategies they'd used to boost their graduates' employability skills through extra-curricular activity programmes. Graduates with the diverse mix of talents and willingness to take risk typical of an entrepreneurial mindset are more likely to gain employment as stated by the Pedagogy for Employability Group (2004), as referenced by (Pool & Sewell, 2007). As demanded by employers, the following skills were identified as crucial in performing successful daily tasks and also improve productivity in the workplace. However, these skills can only be enhanced through extra-curricular activity programmes in the tertiary institutions.

- Problem-solving skills
- Goal setting skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Team working skills
- Time management
- Ability to use new technology
- Creative thinking and imagination
- Ability to work independently
- Planning, coordination and organizing ability
- Ability to manage others
- Attention to details
- Ability to work under pressure
- Assumption of responsibility
- Entrepreneurial skills

To prepare students for success in the labour market that is constantly shifting, businesses and educational institutions must work together to raise students' awareness on the importance of

developing employability skills and equip them with the resources they need to actively pursue their acquisition and development. (Succi & Canovi, 2020).

Graduates' Employability with Extra-curricular Activities

What makes college graduate employable is the skills and work ethics acquired and developed while studying in school. Students are likely to be employable if the universities engaged their students with extra-curricular activities programmes to help them develop the needed skills, attitudes, and character trait that will make them successful in their workplace (Hinchlife & Jolly, 2011).

Bunting (2020) opined that tertiary institutions should be restructured to be practical-oriented, functional, viable and dynamic and all these can only be achieved via full implementation of extra-curricular activity programmes. The course contents of the

Improving Extra-curricular Activity Programmes

This study confirmed that the core of developing employability is developing self. This supports claims that many students enters higher institutions with little or no knowledge on how the industry works, others guided by unrealistic ideas about how the industry works (Arum & Roska, 2011).

In designing the curriculum, the curriculum developers should ask themselves if the content of the curriculum will achieve the educational goal and also meet the demands of the Employers Requirement Approach (ERA). It is important to assess the curricular if the content is adequately developing the students' possible industry-based skills such as

- Leadership roles in community group
- How to write an application letter for work
- How to access employers and job listing
- Creating press releases and short social media posts

In an era of globalization, the need for increasing and expanding skills is seen as global competencies' this is an emergent area for future career and employability provision. Gaining experience in a relevant require skills is a great way to boost graduates' employability because of how important it is to put knowledge into action. Work-based learning and internships are incorporated into degree courses as part of this plan. The only way to create what Ferns (2014) calls 'A relevant and authentic student experience' is for institutions of higher education to work with local companies and organizations. Having shown that training in skills increases students' chances of finding work, Smith et al. (2014) argued that greater opportunities for industrial training should be included into academic curriculum, some of the potential benefits of including industrial trainings as a central employability strategy including a more competent and skilled work-force, better industry-education partnerships, and more knowledgeable leadership roles.

Industrial Training

Participating in industrial trainings enhances a graduates' employability, experience, and the capacity to manage their job. This is a fantastic opportunity for them to get experience in their profession while also advancing their careers by increasing the number of available part-time jobs in the area and making sure undergraduates have access to a variety of industrial trainings opportunity in research and other professional areas. We can better serve the need of graduate student community. Higher institutions think they can improve graduates' employability skills by facilitating the acquisition of marketable skills via a variety of internship, externship, placement, teaching practice and other experiential learning opportunities (Ferns, 2014). The tertiary institutions should provide an extensive set of undergraduate industrial trainings opportunities to address the needs of the postgraduate community to explore employment opportunity available. This will also promote part-time job opportunities locally. Industrial training programmes helps in strengthening the employability skills of future graduates.

Ferns, (2014), opined that Industry-learning experience is another way of improving graduates' employability, by initiating work placement and work integrated learning within school programmes

thereby enhancing their confidence in techniques and skills that would be required for future work this is because it is more important to practice what they learn.

Furthermore, partnership between tertiary institutions, industry and community are crucial to ensuring a relevant and authentic student experience, having demonstrated the impact of industrial training on graduates' work-readiness, Smith et al., (2014) suggested that industrial training opportunities be built in the curricula. The potential benefits of including industrial training as key employability strategy, include improving work-force capability, skills and individual prospect alongside stronger industry-education partnerships and informed leadership role as stated earlier.

Leadership, Curriculum Evaluation and Building School Capacities

Schools and universities are always under pressure to maintain their curricula with shifting employers' expectations current trends. Most organization have set a very high expectations for their workers in terms of skills, knowledge and practical abilities this is because practical abilities and competencies have grown increasingly in the eyes of recruiters, whereas cognitive and intellectual have become secondary (Bondarouk & Dorst, 2015).

The study also took into account the important part that school administration plays in determining what is taught and how it is taught. School administrator should care about how a given intervention or modification in the classroom affects students' and alumni's long-term success, as argued by Robinson (2011). And be able to see how far their alums have come and if they're on track to achieve their career goal which leads graduate self-efficacy, competence growth, and productivity in the work-force are all easily measurable outcomes of pedagogical or curricular changes. If, as academics, we are unclear as to what exactly we are aiming at, then it seems reasonable to expect that students will be even less as to what they should be learning then employers and the society at large will be unsure of what they are getting in as graduates (Barrie, 2005). However, this can also lead to high rate of unemployed graduates due to their inability to meet the required skills by the employers as a result, the society have wondered at the following questions;

- Are the academic courses meeting the declared goals of the curriculum?
- Is the curriculum geared towards developing skills and knowledge that will increase graduates' chances of finding work?
- Are coursework components being correctly implemented and supported?
- Do learning activities provide opportunities for the development of the desired skills and learners attributes?
- Do lessons include topics and programmes of national relevance in structuring and delivery content in local context?
- Do all educators make use of appropriate, extra-curricular chances to grow as professionals?
- What evidence do you have that the professional development programme is positively influencing school practice or learners achievement without the full implementation of the extra-curricular activity programmes?

According to Agi and Adiele (2015), capacity development planning involves the continuous adjustment, and modification of educational programmes to meet the current needs and trends in the society. This helps to ensure that educational programmes remain relevant all the time. The various reforms in the National education system are the direct result of capacity development planning activities

Employable Skills through Extra-curricular programmes

Extra-curricular activity programmes engages students with different activities such as field trips, industrial trainings, sports activities, entrepreneurial education, art and craft, competitions etc all these and many more are extra-curricular activities that enhances graduates' employability whereby developing their skills. Industries and employers are looking for skilled individuals who can hit ground running in this regard, The National Association of College and Employers (NACE) which is a professional association that connect career to potential employers, has compile a list of the top 20 skills requested by employers when hiring candidates.



Communication
Problem-solving
Teamwork
Analytical
Initiative
Technical skills
Computer skills
Organizational skills
Creativity skills
Risk-Taking skills
Strategic planning skills
Tactfulness
Detailed-Oriented
Leadership abilities
Strong ethic
Fluency in foreign language
Adaptability

Source: Job Outlook, 2014, National Association of College and Employer (NACE)

Communication

An excellent communication skill gives an edge over us others in a competitive labour market. In the context of this study, communication is a premium requirement by employers' globally in candidates, hence students need to develop their communication skill as part of their academic curriculum in order to be successful in the institutions and beyond.

Excellent communication skills make you more employable hence, it enhanced companies productivity and efficiency and help improve your competence. Non-technical abilities like problem-solving and self management rely heavily on effective communication.

Many experts, each with their own definition of 'communication' have attempted to pin down its precise meaning. It's often thought of as the process of imparting knowledge to others. Communication is not a one-time event but rather an ongoing process that is neither static nor unchanging. There are necessary components for any kind of interaction to take place. All forms of communication-verbal, nonverbal, and written require these three elements: a communicator, a message, and an audience. According to the oxford dictionary defined communication as the act of conveying information or ideals from one person to another. Based on the findings of the study, it is clear that teaching students how to communicate effectively through a variety of channels through extra-curricular activity such as; the internet, computers, and other electronic device-is an important step towards making graduates more marketable in the job market as well as verbal and interpersonal communication and initiative which are all highly valued by employers.

Skills

A skill development is a learning process, it is an expertise, competence, and talent needed in order to perform operational tasks. A skill is an initiative that emanate in bringing new ideas to reality, skills are developed through life and work experience. Most jobs requires multiple skills, however, some skills are important and useful than the other to perform different tasks and in different professions, Indeed (2020) as referenced by (Nwiyi, 2021). Skill acquisition is the ability of an individual or a graduate to develop capacity in order to be gainfully employed. It is the effort made by tertiary institutions to improve the capacity of graduates in terms of innovations and technology.

Entrepreneurial Skills

Many researchers and psychologist including businessmen and educators have investigated the key role of entrepreneurial skills in every organization, the important of entrepreneurial skills which can



be acquire in the tertiary institutions through extra-curricular activities programmes cannot be over emphasized. Over time entrepreneurial skills has proven to make individual attained successful career pursue. However, Entrepreneurial skills is the ability of individuals to be able to discover their personal traits such as mental ability, drive or personal motivation, communication ability, ability to learn, networking, innovation and techniques. These skills are needed by employers any organization for activities to boost their activities and perform organizational tasks.

Conclusion

The study has established the important, role of extra-curricular activities programmes such as industrial trainings, placement, clubs, sports, workshops, internships, entrepreneurship programmes. However, the involvement of employers in planning the curriculum to create relevant skills, build strong and genuine relationship with industry thereby enhancing the employability skills of graduates of tertiary institutions in order to improve their job readiness in the labour market.

Suggestions

1. Tertiary institutions should engage students with extra-curricular activities that expose them to new technologies, facilities, and equipment so as to enhance their work experience with knowledge about skills, attributes through internships, workshops, placements, industrial trainings, and entrepreneurship programmes.
2. Work-based learning and internship should be incorporated into degree courses or academic programmes.
3. Tertiary institutions should incorporate partnership with industries in ensuring that the relevant skills needed by the industry are been implemented into the curriculum.

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