

**BRIDGING THE EMPLOYMENT GAP: STRATEGIES FOR NIGERIA'S UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
TO REDUCE GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT**

Stella Ofor-Douglas Ph. D
Institute Of Education, Faculty of Education
Rivers State University, Rivers State, Nigeria
EMAIL: stellaofor031@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6855-2106>

ABSTRACT

Bridging the employment gap is addressing the challenges that have risen in the bid for graduates to seek employment. Graduate unemployment is of significant concern and involves graduates being unable to find gainful employment in connection with their skills and qualifications. There has been an alarming rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria which can be an indicator of a gap that exists between the university system and the existing market. One of the hindrance in bridging the employment gap is education job mismatch which is a contributing factor to unemployment as there seems to be a disconnect in what employers require and what the graduates have to offer. This skill disparity and disconnect has made graduates unemployable. Another glaring factor is the relentless pursuit of white collar job, graduates lack a sense of independence and are not entrepreneurially wise. This paper will emphasize on the skills mismatch, employability skills and the role entrepreneurship education will play in the long run in curbing unemployment. There are several issues which indicate and serve as contributing factors to graduate unemployment and solutions such as collaboration between university and industries, entrepreneurship programs. In the end if the issues are properly looked into then there is a probability of curbing graduate unemployment as there is much work to be done to reduce this significant problem post university graduation.

Keywords: Bridging Employment gap, University system, Graduates Unemployment, Strategies to reduce Graduate Unemployment

INTRODUCTION

Graduate unemployment is a menace and force of frustration for individuals that have successfully completed their university phase. Universities are relatively independent crucial responsibility of talent cultivation, forming a vital part of the national social system and urban development (Yu-ling et al, 2024). Year in, year out there is a gradual increase in the number of graduates and yet these number of individuals find themselves unemployed. What seems to be eye-catching is the fact that there exist a skills mismatch as graduates lack the necessary employability skills to meet the growing demands of the market. This is another problem derailing the development of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities. The leadership/administrators of a university is meant to play a vital role in the development of undergraduate potential. They are in charge of making policies that guide the activities of the students. These activities would then contribute to the development of the potential of students. Some universities are not adequately run by administrators as they lack the qualities needed for effective management of higher education (university education inclusive) (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). This paper aims to significantly highlight the role the Nigerian university system will play in bridging the gap of employment and reducing graduate unemployment while doing so. The objectives of this paper is to examine the rate and state of graduate unemployment, highlight on employability skills and look at possible collaboration for all the parties involved. In different years several researchers have carried out work in this area but have not been able to address the missing gap of collaboration between the industry and university.

University system

Universities in Nigeria are supposed to be demand driven based on knowledge, skills and experience relative to what the market and customers actually need and not basically on what the universities in Nigeria thinks the market needs. Through university education, qualified skilled manpower are produced who are competent to the society for efficient and effective labour force which makes up the labour market (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). Similarly, Franzoni and Cassano as cited in Okon James and Aniwrainu (2020) envisage that recent global debate on the integration of sustainable economic development in the quality of universities that have the potential to bring about profound change, starting from capacity development. Universities are the most important promoters of the knowledge economy, not only because they produce brain workers, but also because make their structures and the results of their activities available to the community from labourers to networks, from libraries to outcomes.

Education

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge and ideas that shape and condition man's attitudes and action and achievement. Education may construct or destroy a nation depending on the utilization and application of the acquired knowledge (Ekwealor and Orizu, 2021). Etor, Mbon and Ekanem (2013) as cited in Okonta and Nwanokor (2021) collectively agreed that the teacher is the facilitator of learning. Without the teacher, most of the goals and aims of education cannot be achieved. Investment in human capital relates to the stock of knowledge and skills possessed by the worker which contributes to a worker's production capacity (Teixeria, 2014). In the same vein, Odigwe and Owan (2019) argued that education fulfils the human need for knowledge acquisition and create a means to maintain and ensure continuous development. Education is the impartation of knowledge and relevant skills to the learners through positive change in attitude and behaviour that will be beneficial in community, environment and the society he/she finds themselves. Nevertheless, the development of any society and nation depends on its educational system, this is because it is the educational system that produces the manpower to the society as an output for `or positive change in behaviour after an individual undergoes the tutelage of rigorous experience which will add value to him/herself and the society at large (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). Additionally, an individual whether in a formal or informal setting will be given the right type of training to sustain them in society. The worth of education is measured by the quality of its outputs (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). Education plays a key role in cultivating the skills and mind-set necessary for young individuals to thrive as competitive and inventive members of society, particularly within the dynamic and swiftly evolving global economy (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). On the other hand, Odenigbo and Eze (2019), submitted that education creates employment opportunities, improves capacity, ensures equity and inclusion, develops individuals' technological competence, and makes lives more prosperous. The social demand approach is one approach that emphasizes the universality of education if positive national integration and development is to be achieved. It was pioneered by Charles Sanders Piece who viewed education as a necessity of life that should be made available to all citizens. The demand for formal education is not only for its benefits in employment, but also as a consumer good with intrinsic values in its own right (Ekwealor and Orizu, 2021). Education can only lead to sustainable development if the output (graduates) are gainfully employed. In a situation where graduates are unemployed, there will definitely be the problem of graduates' unemployment which will act as a hindrance to sustainable development (Osaat & Emujakporue, 2023). A system of education can be successfully but mindlessly run, especially when stakeholders, educators and learners themselves approach education with the assumption that they are so deeply familiar with the process that it fails to carefully consider the outcome of what is being called education. (Ikegbusi & Admu, 2021). Furthermore, Rowell and Money (2018) put it that education ensures the development of people, whilst providing a means to meet other human basic needs. The aim of

education is to build human character and to make young generation so that they might assist in achieving the democratic values (Ekweakor and Orizu, 2021). In a related position, a major purpose for establishing universities in these countries was and still is, for the institutions to play a pioneering role in addressing problems of poverty, social disorganization, low production, unemployment, hunger, illiteracy and diseases (the problems of underdevelopment) which appeared to be common on the African continent (Moshia, 1986; & Odhiambo, 2018) as cited in Ofor-Douglas, 2023). Education in Nigeria should be more holistic, the purpose being to prepare the young people to meet not only the challenges of their academic life but life as well. They will have opportunity to learn about themselves, about the social development, emotional development and much more. At the end of it all, they will have a positive impact on their immediate communities and on the nation at large. (Kumar 2011). In essence, "To improve transition from school to work regardless of the economic climate, the education system should work to ensure that individuals have the skills that are needed in the labour market and reduce the proportion of young adults who are either in school nor in work" (Anderson, 2014).

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is education that is programmed to train individuals on the necessary knowledge and skills to own and manage a business. In the face of economic challenges in Nigeria, particularly in a depressed economy, the importance of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities cannot be overstated. Entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in fostering self-reliance among students, equipping them with the necessary skills and mind-set to create their own opportunities and contribute to economic growth (Ofor Douglas, 2024). Likewise, Usman (2017) believed that this can be achieved through entrepreneurship education that is bridging the gap of employment. This is true in the sense that it tends to discourage dependence on white collar job. On the other hand, entrepreneurship education has a great influence as it serves to empower students with the knowledge, and skills to navigate their untapped potentials. In light of this, entrepreneurship tends to foster collaboration amongst students to address challenges regarding sustainability. It is important that an entrepreneurial spirit can be fostered amongst graduates as the future comes with a lot of sustainable practices (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). Youths are regarded as the leaders of tomorrow and need to be educated to having the mind-set of been business minded to enable economic growth. Entrepreneurship education is a necessity for any youth as it can help one become financially independent and express their creativity (Ofor Douglas, 2024). Similarly, Obananya (2022) as cited in (Ofor Douglas, 2024) emphasized that entrepreneurship increases a country's overall productivity, stimulates wealth creation, lowers unemployment, and encourages innovative thinking and discoveries. Meanwhile, entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities is presently gaining a foothold with various implementation intensities across universities. Therefore without a doubt, Oluchi and Ahmed (2017) as cited by Ofor-Douglas (2022), observed that entrepreneurship education plays a vital role in empowering youth by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities requisite for self-employment which fosters job creation among youth. This finding agrees with the opinion of Ikechukwu and Najimu cited in Ofor-Douglas, 2024) that acquisition of practical skills relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life will improve the standard of living of people and assist in eradicating poverty in the society.

Skills

Anyanwu (2019) asserted that skill is the art of possessing ability to power, authority or competence to do the task required of an individual to do a job. This means an individual is properly equipped to undertake the job. Universities tend to inculcate a wide range of skills to students for critical thinking, problem solving, communication, teamwork, leadership, research methodology, and technical skills relevant to chosen fields. Evidently, it contributes to the increase of the number of potential workers and helps meet the requirements for skilled and semi-skilled workers in different

economic sectors (Dissou et al., 2016). Additionally, theoretical and practical knowledge (academic knowledge), are often encouraged through internships, industrial training, seminars, research projects, and practical sessions in laboratories or workshops (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). In lieu of this, the implication of this change is that it is no longer enough for graduates to have good degrees but they should also possess the skills and attributes required to compete and collaborate in a dynamic knowledge economy and world of work (Newton, 2015). Skills entails special abilities gained through committed learning and practice which enable an individual to be proficient in his work role in a chosen occupational field (Kirsten, Charles & Maya, 2018). Furthermore, skills are the foundation of graduates' employability. Because of the persistent high level of unemployment between young people, the issue of graduate's skills earned universal importance both to scholars and policy makers trying to tackle unemployment issue by providing students with skills and competences that fulfil the needs of the very competitive current labour market (Pereira, 2016). In relation to the above line of thought, it is anticipated that universities will enhance the employability of their graduates by equipping them with skills and expertise that are highly regarded and rewarded by employers (Menon et al, 2018). However, university education need to embed transferable and career-related skills development within the curriculum alongside subject-specific knowledge acquisition to ensure that students improve their chances of obtaining high-skilled employment (Fahnert, 2015). Similarly, employers of labour anticipate that graduates from tertiary institutions, including universities, will have the necessary skills for the workplace. However, some do not, and as a result, some employers of labour have repeatedly expressed their displeasure over what is known as skill mismatch (Pitan & Adedeji, 2012) cited in (Ofor-Douglas, 2024).

Job skill mismatch

Skill mismatch can be seen as the various forms of discrepancies, including vertical mismatch (typically measured through indicators such as over education, under education, over skilling and under skilling) skill gaps, skill shortages (measured by unfilled and difficult-to-fill job vacancies), the field of study (horizontal) mismatch and skill obsolescence (McGuinness, Pouliaklas & Redmond, 2017). That even when jobs are available, many people do not have the necessary skills to fill those positions (Kazeem, 2020). This is why the situation will make many people who are qualified for jobs remain unemployed (Ndubisi, 2014). Notably, Alkatheri and Al-Ghamdi (2019) asserted that the issue of joblessness is significantly affected by discrepancies in skills and misalignments in education relative to labor market demands. Their research highlights the importance of responsive measures and advocates for forward-thinking approaches to skill enhancement. Remarkably, vertical skills mismatch has been seen as one of the main culprits for the high rates of unemployment and the precarity of employment in South Africa (Business Tech, 2021). Meanwhile, Ogunode and Onakoya (2024) reiterated that societal problems can be solved by tertiary institutions whose roles and mandates include helping societies solve pressing socioeconomic and health problems through research. The importance of education to both national and individual development is indisputable. This is because highly educated human resource is a requisite for national development. Individuals have used education as a tool for social, economic development hence education is valued as a tool for social development. Nations spend much of their resources to enhance their education process and improve on learner's achievement.

Employability

Employability is when an individual has the ability to secure and maintain a job. At the very least this individual is equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills to adapt to the changes in the ever evolving market. Many countries have integrated employability with their higher education system's recognizing it as a fundamental and indispensable component of higher education (Sumanasiri et al., 2015). Additionally, employers are looking for candidates that can adapt, take the initiative and execute various duties in different context (Pitan & Muller, 2023). In support of this, many

universities including those in Nigeria, are already making efforts to engage in strategic approaches to foster employability among their students (Adedeji et al, 2016; Bradley et al., Okolie et al., 2021). Evidently, Explicit Embedding and Integration refer to teaching employability skills as separate courses within a degree program. In the paralleled approach, employability is delivered outside the course through careers and services rendered within the institution (Bradley et al, 2022; Romanova, 2022).

Unemployment

Aptly, unemployment is a situation in which individuals who are willing and able to work cannot find jobs to do (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). Without a doubt, Fajana (2000) as cited in Balogun (2024) rightly said that unemployment infers to a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find sustainable paid employment. As such, unemployment among youth is caused by numerous reasons. During economic downturn, the youth are more vulnerable as opposed to their older colleagues (Oluwajodu et al., 2015).

Ayanyemi and Adelabu (2016) is of the opinion that there is a close bond between unemployment and poverty with direct bearings on the economy and graduates. Lack of necessary productive capability of the labour force determined by education level to meet the requirement of job opening creates unemployment problem (Baah-Boateng, 2015). In light of the same, graduate unemployment was less than one percent of the labour force in 1974, but rose to four percent in 1984 (Akintoye & Opeyemi, 2014). The general household survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2017 put the unemployment rate in Nigeria to be more than 30 percent. This a very worrisome development to all stakeholders: the society, the unemployed and the government. Particularly worrisome is the rising rate of graduate unemployment among the unemployed labour force in the country over the years (NBS, 2018) as cited in (Okafor & Egenti, 2021). In the same pattern, Nigeria, currently faces a grave threat from the crisis of unemployment that has resulted in several conflicts and acts of insecurity. These have been linked to the catastrophe of the thousands of school graduates rolled out every year who were unable to find jobs due to shortage of skills or the fierce competition for the few available position (NBS, 2018) as cited in (Okafor & Egenti, 2021). Cutler et al. (2015) acknowledged that higher unemployment associated with lower income, lower life satisfaction, greater obesity, more smoking and drinking later in life. This explained why, unemployment is an issue that Nigeria is experiencing presently. This is the most obvious among the graduates that are produced from the various institution of higher education (university education inclusive) (Osaat & Emujakporue, 2023). However, the above submission is shared by Aririah (2022) that about 520,000 unemployed Nigerians graduates stormed different recruitment centres to apply just for 4,000 vacant position that was advertised by Nigerian Immigration services. This viewed is sustained by Omitogun and Longe (2017) further appealed that unemployment is one of the major problems currently being faced by Nigerian government in the 21st century. Unemployment is a situation whereby people who are physically fit, capable, quailed and ready to work at any time are without job. The issue of unemployment is one of the macroeconomic problems of the country. For this reason, the problem of unemployment among the ranks of graduates of tertiary institutions in spite of their increased skills and educational qualification cannot conducting an in-depth study to shed light on whether the phenomenon of qualification/ education job mismatch exists in the graduate arm of the nation's labour market. Without fear of contradiction, youth unemployment is devastating to both the individual psychologically and economically (Ajufo, 2013). As enunciated, an estimated 2.5 million of new labour force enters the nations labour market every year with 60% (1.5 million) of the new entrants being youths (including graduates) who possess only paltry job experience and skills (Adesugba & Mavrontas, 2016). In the same vein, in the majority of developing countries, unemployment has grown to be a serious problem (Adanlawo, Owolabi & Vezi-Magigaba, 2021). Nevertheless, the majority of young people who are unemployed are graduates of universities, report from the Federal

Ministry of Labour and Productivity, 2018 as cited in (Adanlawo & Nkomo, 2023). This argument is empirically supported by, and in order to alleviate the age long problem of graduates without employment, vocational and technical education plays the role of training the Nigerian Youths in definite skills such that the gap between the labor market and the preparatory courses is bridged (Ovbiagele, 2015).

However, the reason for the missing of technological development leads to the nation being a consumer nation rather than a productive one. This has resulted in the nation importing most of the simple goods they consume, ranging from tooth picks to machines. Furthermore, failure to develop vocational-technical education has brought about bad economy, poverty, and unemployment, and a mass exodus of the youths to foreign lands for greener pasture, whereas other nations that followed their technical development tracks resulted to their greatness (Ukachi & Ejiko, 2018). As clearly pointed out, Innocent (2016) ; Agbede, Olorunmolu and Malgwi (2016) that unemployment has become a major problem in Nigeria and millions of graduates and school leavers are busy roaming the streets in search of elusive jobs. For instance, "Unemployment is a major security challenge in Nigeria, and vocational technical education can help address this issue." (Daluba, 2015). As a result, unemployment is understood to occur when a proportion of the labour force that is able and available for work do not work as a result of the unavailability of profitable jobs to engage themselves even for a period of time (Nwakanma, & Igbe, 2020). Observably, a case in point is in cross River State alone, the unemployment rate is calculated to be 30.6% in 2019, as many persons within the productive age are not able to access gainful employment irrespective of their qualification and skillsets. 10, 7. The National Bureau of Statistics inferred an unemployed person as one who does not have work or only works for less than 20 hours a week. The unemployment rate in Nigeria is at the 4th quarter of 2016 was estimated at 21% (National Bureau of Statistics). It increased to 18.80% in the third quarter of 2017 from 16.20% in the second quarter. Oddly enough, Fynn (2020) study shows that university graduates may remain unemployed for up to a year. Accordingly, a study carried out by Okon, Eminue, and Leema (2016) showed that vocational and technical skills training have positive impact on alleviation of unemployment. Invariably, another study survey carried out has shown that 47% of the country's university graduates are unemployed in Nigeria (Kazeem, 2016). Having observed this ugly situation, Emeh et al. (2012) averred that past studies indicate that Nigeria's high rate of unemployment among university graduate is due not only to a lack employment opportunities but also a shortage of applications with the employability skills that employers are seeking (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). On the other hand, youth unemployment is one of the macro-economic problems, which every responsible government is expected to regularly monitor and control. It has been observed that the higher the unemployment rate in an economy, the higher the poverty levels and other associated social challenges (Nwakanma, & Igbe, 2020). Further reiterating, the rising rate of unemployment in Nigeria has been classified as a major bane to sustainable development in the country and has been linked to the increasing security risks and criminality in major parts of the country (Nwakanma, & Igbe, 2020).). In affirmation, NBS 7 in 2017 has lamented that youth unemployment in Nigeria contributes to the increasingly miserly index in the country, which was regrettably reached 49.5% as of 2017. 19.

Graduate Unemployment

Graduates refer to the number of students who finished a programme within the specified time period (Ofor-Douglas, 2024). Unemployment occurs when an adult of working age remains idle due to lack of employment opportunities or other conditions including irrelevance as a result of obsolete skills. Graduate unemployment refers to a situation where graduates of tertiary educational institutions like colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics and universities who are of working age are unable to find jobs (Nwokike, Maben & Ezenwafor, 2021). Another concerning issue is the educational curriculum and its design, which are mostly outdated (Khamal et al., 2021;

Upadhyay et al., 2018). The challenges such as graduate unemployment, employment mismatch, low productivity and underemployment has indeed challenged the contributions quest for more educational pursuit in Nigeria (Adejumo et al, 2021).

Effect of unemployment

The resultant effect of this high rate of unemployment in Nigeria is youth restiveness of all kinds such as blowing off of crude oil pipes, kidnapping as well as these youth organizing themselves into militant groups in the form of Egbesu boys, Almajiris, "Area boys" and Boko Haram to target the very society that alienated them (Liolio, 2013)) as cited in Andow (2024). Concerning unemployment, the statistics show that it was only 4.31% in 2015 with an annual change of -0.25%, but in 2021, it has grown to 9.79% with an annual change rate of 0.07% (The World Bank, 2021). Agbede, Olorunmolu and Malgwi (2016) on the effect of youth unemployment on the Nigerian economy opined that directly resulting from increase poverty incidence is loss of effective demand in the economy consequent on loss of wages and other fringe benefits attached to gainful employment.

Causes of unemployment

Among the causes of unemployment is inadequate employability skills. This problem is said to be traceable to the disequilibrium between labor market requirements and lack of essential employable skills by the graduates (Diejomah and Orimolade, 1991). As cited in (Balogun, 2024). In the educational curriculum, entrepreneurship is not prioritized, the level of instruction is inadequate given the circumstances of society (Aririah, 2022) as cited in (Ofor-Douglas, 2022). It has been observed that the fear of remaining in your parents' house if you are lucky to have parents nor people you can depend on after graduating from university is a constraint on many youths' mind. They look for opportunities to learn trade skills such as catering, tailoring, carpentry etc, which is miles away from what they study at the university because they know that they need a backup plan in case the Nigerian education system fails them (Ofor-Douglas, 2022). Because the right type of university education is yet to be presented to the students in the universities, but are still on traditional methods of teaching, obsolete infrastructures facilities, curriculum, laboratory and library. Consequently, some university education still operates the traditional method of teaching and learning, when others in the western world are already embracing new innovations, collaboration, partnership and inter-universities linkages where students can exchange ideas to invent and all that. In this 21st century what is needed in Nigeria is new technological knowledge, innovative ideas, E-learning, zoom, etc... Unfortunately even when these lofty things are available there is still the issues of power outage, lack of maintenance culture, shortage of skilled manpower and technicians to man some of these facilities. Lecturers still sticking to old method of doing things instead of adapting to the 21st century of technological age.

Curriculum design

Nevenglosky (2018) described curriculum as specification about practice of teaching, which involves programme efficiency or learners' experiences. A curriculum can be inferred as a general overview of the academic activities of a course that a university/college utilizes to guide the academic year (Ofor-Douglas, 2023). Amahi and Ana (2021) mentioned that curriculum is all the learning activities planned for students which are directed by the school to attain specified educational goals. Furthermore, curriculum is a systematic choice of knowledge, skills, attitudes and views as the goal of educational reform in order to produce qualified graduates. (Stabbade, 2016). Nnabuike, Aneke and Otegbulu, (2016) agreed that curriculum is a document which contains the needs of society stated as goals and objectives and arranged contents, learning experiences that are expected to be transferred to learners. Ekele (2015) stated that curriculum involves a series of activities which results to written guide for teachers in the classroom for use in the education of the students in

order for them to become effective members of the society. Curriculum design is a process that involves creating, designing, organizing a curriculum. The prevailing culture that places exclusive authority on curriculum design in the hands of a few experts perpetuates a lack of agency among teachers (Bista et al., 2019). In some cases, individual faculty members are designated to develop curricula based on their expertise (Thapa, 2018). The curricula often lack detailed guidelines, and are subject to individual professors' personal preferences, biases, interest, or experience (Upadhyay, 2018). Also the design and development of the curriculum also indicate a misalignment with the skills demanded by employers, necessitating attention to bridge the gap between education and employment outcomes (Ilo, 2016; Sharma, 2023). University education has been criticized for the fact that their mode of training has little or no relevance to the social and economic needs of their countries (Rufai et al, 2015). Regrettably, which consequently leads to the production of unemployable graduates.

Issues

There are several key issues that have been identified which need to be subsequently addressed in accordance to the problems faced by graduates

Curriculum Relevance

Here there is a disconnect between what the needs of the market are, and what the university graduates have to offer. Gbosi (2005) cited in (Ibikunle et al., 2019) clearly stated that proliferation of higher educational institutions and those seeking higher education for the purpose of white-collar jobs is the main factor responsible for unemployment problem. It has been observed that the existing university curriculum is not producing graduates with that kind of professional and lifelong learning skills that they need in order to be successful in the competitive and congested changing world of work (Lees, 2002) as cited in (Pitan, 2016).

Labour Market Imbalance

There is a lack of employability skills which employers require that is insufficient in graduates. On that note, Akintayo *et al* (2020) suggested that there is a huge gap between graduates and workforce in Nigeria and the skills needed by employers. It is possible that despite the large number of graduates in Nigeria, they lack the necessary skillsets to fit productively into the current and technologically evolving industries and companies. Effiong (2019) as cited in Uchehu, Okeke-Onkonkwo and Ifi (2019) opined that graduates from universities have difficulty in getting established because most of them are grossly deficient in skills required to secure and succeed in paid or self-employment. Adeyemo (2011) identified that the problem of graduate unemployment is traceable to the disequilibrium between labour market requirements and lack of essential employable skills on the part of Nigerian graduates. Similarly, Abdulqadir & Chua (2020) rightly said that the interaction of technology, shifts in demography as well as changing industry needs combine to influence the current labor market in Nigeria, in the 21st century. The resolving consequence of skill mismatch occurs when the demand by employers differ from the skills possessed by the jobseekers/workforce, leading to low and inefficient productivity, underemployment and stunted economic growth (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2021).

Entrepreneurial oversight

Entrepreneurship training may be present in the university but a lack of emphasis on its value in enhancing independence in graduates is what leads them to place so much significance in white collar jobs rather than creating opportunities for themselves. Suleiman (2010) explained that entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people particularly the youths to be responsible, enterprising individual who became entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing them in real life learning experience whereby they can take risks, manage result and learn from the

outcome. Nigerian higher institutions seem to lack adequate and high level manpower for effective teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education in the country. The available teachers recruited from the existing faculties do not have relevant skills to cope with the challenges of the new curriculum (Alabi et al., 2014). Furthermore, due to the theoretical and consumption oriented educational curriculum adopted in most secondary and higher educational institute the work force can hardly initiatively make a living due to lack of entrepreneurial skill (Ibikunle et al., 2019).

A disconnect between the industry and university

Poor partnerships between universities and industries lead to a lack of input from employers in curriculum development. Collaboration results in good knowledge transfer activities between industry and institute (Salimaki, 2011 cited in (Joshua et al., 2015). There is no active engagement between the universities and industries and therefore there is a disconnect in what industry requires and what the university graduates can offer. The linkage between university and industry is very weak in Africa including Nigeria and do not produce the skill assets needed for industrial productivity leading to low absorption level by the available industries (Joshua et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there can be a possible bridge in the employment gap by working on strategies to curb issues which cause graduate unemployment. All parties involved which are the university, industry, government need to come together to successfully curb the issues. The starting point will be an enhancement and improvement of the curriculum to include extensive entrepreneurship education which can produce Nigerian graduates who are considered employable for the labour market. An effective implementation of these strategies by the parties involved can give graduates a chance to adapt to labour market needs.

Suggestions

There are several ways in which the issues plaguing graduate unemployment can be addressed.

1. The curriculum should be regularly reviewed and updated to accommodate current trends and employability skills required by the demanding market.
2. Opportunities for practical based knowledge should be established through industries to give graduates a feel of what is required of them practically and not limit them to theoretical knowledge.
3. Funds and resources should be made available to individuals who are likely to have a business to startup so as to support entrepreneurship and encourage self-reliance which discouraging a pursuit of white collar jobs.
4. Strong relations should be established between the university and industries to ensure a continuous flow of information especially in the area of the curriculum.

REFERENCES

- Abdulqadir, I.A. & Chua, S.Y.(2020). Asymmetric impact of exchange rate pass-through into employees' wages in sub-Saharan Africa: Panel non-linear threshold estimation. *Journal of economic studies*, 47(7), 1629-1647.
- Adanlawo, F.E. & Nkomo, Y.N. (2023). Gender separation of entrepreneurship skills acquisition programmes for economic development. *International Journal of business and economic development*, 11(2), 14-21.
- Adanlawo, E.F, Vezi-Magigaha, M. & Owolabi, O. C. (2021) Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria: The effect on economy and people's welfare. *African Journal of development studies*, 11(2), 163-181.

- Adejumo, O.O., Asongu, S.A & Adejumo, A.V. (2021). Education enrolment rate vs employment rate: Implications for sustainable human capital development in Nigeria. *International Journal of educational development*, 1(2), 83-94.102385.
- Adekanmbi FP, Ukpere W. Influence of minimum wage and prompt salary payment on teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 19(1), 116.
- Adesugba, M.A. & Mavrontas, G. (2016). Delving deeper into the agriculture, transformation and youth employment Nexus: The Nigerian Case, Nigeria Strategy Support Program Working Paper 31. Washington DC: *International food policy Research institute*.
- Adeyemo, S.A. (20 II) Adult education as a panacea to the menace of unemployment in Oyo State, Nigeria. Commission for International Adult Education (CIAE) Proceedings of the 2011 Pre-Conference October 30- November I, 20 II. Indianapolis, Indiana
- Agbede, E.A., Olorunmolu, J.O., &Malgwi, P.A. (2016). Youth unemployment in Nigeria: An obstacle to economic development. In D.O. Lawani (Ed.) Education and sustainable development in Nigeria.
- Ajufo, B.I. (2013). Challenges of youth Nigeria: Effective career guidance as a panacea. *African Research renew*. Retrieved from www.ajol.info.2013. 7(1), 307-321.
- Akintayo DI, Oyaromade R, Ayantunji IO, Ajibola KS. Engagement and Compensation: A Historical Perspective of Wage Determination and National Minimum Wage in Nigeria. *Islamic University multidisciplinary Journal*, 7(3), 52-60.
- Akintoye, V.A. & Opeyemi, O.A. 2014) Prospects for achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria. *European Journal of sustainable development*, 3(1), 33-46.
- Alabi, T., Alanana , O. & Bahal, M. (2014). Entrepreneurship education: a panacea to graduate unemployment in Nigeria. *Journal of sustainable development in Africa*, 16 (4).
- Alkatheri, S., AL-Malaise & AL-Ghamdi, A. S. (2019). A Systematic Literature Review and Analysis of Unemployment Problem and Potential Solutions. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 182(44), 23-26.
- Amahi, F.U. & Ana, F.N. (2021). Skills requirement of lecturers for effective implementation of office technology and management (OTM) curriculum in Nigeria Polytechnics. *Niger Delta Journal of education*, 13(1), 8-21.
- Aminu, A. (2019). Characterizing graduate unemployment in Nigeria as education-job mismatch problem. *African Journal of economics review*, 7(1), 113-130.
- Anderson, R. (2014). Making education work: A report from the independent advisory group. Retrieved from <https://www.pearson.com> (PDF).

- Andow, H.A. (2024). Effect of entrepreneurial education on self-employment generation in Kaduna Metropolis. *International Journal of management sciences & entrepreneurship*, 11(7), 441-457.
- Anyanwu, U.J. (2019). Entrepreneurial competencies for business education undergraduate in establishing small scale business in Abia State. An unpublished B.sc project, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.
- Aririah, C. (2022). 10 Reasons why Nigerians graduates are unemployed and unemployable. After School Africa. www.afterschoolafrica.com.
- Ayanyemi, A.K. Adelabu, O.A. (2016). Revitalization of technical and vocational education for youth employment and poverty alleviation. *International Journal of education science*, 13(3), 262-270.
- Baah-Boateng, W. (2015). Unemployment in Ghana: A cross-sectional analysis from demand and supply perspectives. *African Journal of economic and management studies*, 6(4), 402-415.
- Balogun, B.B (2024). An Assesment of the role of government in creating employment through entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. *International Journal of management science & entrepreneurship*, 11(7), 341-362.
- Bista, K. Sharma, S. & Raby, R.I. (2019). Telling stories, generating perspectives: Local-global dynamics in Nepalese higher education. In higher education in Nepal. Routledge.
- Business Tech (2021). Young employed South Africans don't have the right skills: Ramapwhsa. Available at: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/technology/526992/young-unemployed-south-africans-dont-have-the-right-skills.ramaphosa/> accessed 15th December, 2024.
- Daluba, N. (2015). Unemployment among youth and place of vocational technical education in Nigeria. Paper presented at 2015 Annual Conference of the Institute of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Ekele, G.E. (2015). Fundamentals of farm management extension and agriculture education. Makurdi; Otis Digital Press.
- Ekwealor, F.N. & Orizu, N. (2021). Educational administration for national integration. *Journal of assertiveness*. 15(1), 1-15.
- Fahrent, B. (2015). On your marks, set, go! – Lessons from the UK in enhancing employability of graduates and postgraduates. *FEMS Microbiology Lecturers*, 362, 1-6.
- Fynn, A. (2020). How to narrow the gap between what universities produce and what employers expect. The Conversation. Retrieved June 7, 2021, from <https://theconversation.com/how-to-narrow-the-gap-betweenwhat-universities-produce-and-what-employers-expect-126060>
- Ibikunle, G.A., Orefuwa, E. R. & Mafo, A. B. (2019). Analysis of the Causes and Effects of Unemployment in Nigeria towards a Solution for Graduate Idleness and Poverty Alleviation. *Journal of humanities and social*, 24, 36-44.

- Innocent, E.O. (2016). Unemployment rate in Nigeria: Agenda for government Academic. *Journal of Interdisciplinary studies*, 3 (4), 2014.103-110. Online www.Mcser.org/Journal/index.php/ajis/articles/view/3077.
- International Labour Organization (2016). National employment policy, unofficial translation. ILD. <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public-asia/...rp-bangkok/...ilo-kathmadu/documents/policy/wcms539895.pdf>.
- Joshua,S., Azuh, D. & Olanrewaju, F.(2015). University- industry collaboration: a panacea to graduate unemployment in Nigeria. *Journal of management research*, 7(1).
- Kazeem Y. (2020). Nigeria's unemployment rate hits a record of 27.1% Quartz Africa. <https://qz.com/africa/1874619/nigerias-unemployment-rate-hits-re>.
- Kazeem, Y. "About half of the university graduates in Nigeria cannot find jobs" in Quartz Africa, 27th January, 2016.
- Kegbusi, N.G. & Adindu, C.O. (2021). Extent of Awareness and Implementation of Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Education in Anambra State. *Journal educational research and development*. 5(1), 333-343.
- Khamal, J., Gaulee, U., & Simpson, O. (2021). Higher education in initiative challenges based on multiple frame of leadership: The case of Nepal open-university. Open learning: *The Journal of open distance and e-learning*.1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2021.1882296>.
- Kirsten, L.H., Charles, F., & Maya, B. (2018). Psychomotor skills for the 21st century: What should students learn? Centre for curriculum redesign Boston MA www.curriculumredesign.org.
- Kumar, S. (2011). The impact of social development on education changing perspectives. In D.K. Singh (Eds. Social aspects to education 188-191). New Delhi.
- McGuinness, S. Pouliaklas, K, & Redmond, P. (2017). How useful is the concept of skills mismatch?
- Menon, M.E., Argyropoulou, E., Stylianou, A. (2018). Managing the link between higher education and the labour market: Perceptions of graduates in Greece and Cyprus. Tertiary education and management. 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2018.1444195>.
- Ndubisi, N.O. (2014). Education and unemployment in Nigeria: A case study of Abia state *International Journal of management and social science research*, 3(11), 21-28.
- Nevenglosky, E. (2018). Barriers to effective curriculum implementation. *Walden dissertations and doctoral studies*. 5235. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/5235>
- Nnabuiké, E.K., Aneke, M.C. & Otegbalu, R.D. (2016). Curriculum implementation and teacher. *Journal of educational practice*, 1(2), 1-14.
- Nwakanma, E. & Igbe, J.E. (2020). Poverty and coping strategies of unemployed youths in Cross Rivers State, Nigeria. *Current research Journal of social sciences*, 3(2), 262-279.

- Nwokike, I.O., Maben, J.I., & Ezenwafor, M.F. (2021). Effective strategies for curbing graduate unemployment through adequate skills development in business education programme in universities in South–East Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of business education (NIGJBED)*, 8 (2), 39-48.
- Obananya, C.G. (2022). Skill acquisition of students and entrepreneurship education in public universities Anambra State, Nigeria. *International Journal of business, economics and entrepreneurship development in Africa*, 10 (5), 146-162.
- Odenigbo, V. & Eze, A. (2019). Factors inhibiting girl child education in Nigeria. <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3358>. Accessed 24th December, 2023.
- Odigwe, F. N., & Owan, V. J. (2019). Trend analysis of the Nigerian budgetary allocation to the education sector from 2009 – 2018 with Reference to UNESCO’S 26% Benchmark. *International Journal of educational benchmark*, 14(1), 1-14.
- Ofor Douglas, S. (2022). Repositioning university education for sustainable youth empowerment and national development in Nigeria. *International Journal of advanced research*. 5(1), 215-226.
- Ofor Douglas, S. (2024). Entrepreneurship education for self- reliance in a depressed economy: The case of university education system in Nigeria. *Journal of international, educational research and development*, 11(2), 66-76.
- Ofor-Douglas, S. (2022) Gains and setbacks related with institutional governance reforms in Nigerian Universities. *International Journal of advanced research*, 5(1), 184-196. <https://doi.10.37284ijar5.1.990>.
- Ofor-Douglas, S. (2023). Diversification for sustainable national development: The Need for curriculum review in university education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Sustainable Development*. 10(2), 73-82.
- Ofor-Douglas, S. (2024). Enhancing university education standard to meet skills demand and supply in Nigeria. *International Journal of innovative education research*, 12(2), 66-79.
- Ofor-Douglas, S. (2024). Managing university education for employability in competitive Nigeria. *International Journal of innovative education research*, 12(1), 131-141.
- Ofor-Douglas, S. (2024). The role of educational management in Nigerian universities for fostering entrepreneurial skills for sustainable development. *Benin Journal of educational studies*, 29(1&2), 92–112. Retrieved from <https://beninjes.com/index.php/bjes/article/view/126>
- Ofor-Douglas, S. (2024). Unlocking university undergraduates’ potentials for sustainable development through entrepreneurship education in the 21st century Nigeria. *Benin Journal of Educational Studies*, 29(1&2), 113–125. Retrieved from <https://beninjes.com/index.php/bjes/article/view/127>
- Okafor, O.J. & Egenti, U.P (2021). Education for sustainable development in Nigeria. *UNIZIK Journal of educational research and policy studies*. 8(1), 86-92. <https://unijerps.org.URL:http://sjfactor.com/passport.php?id=21363>

- Okon, G. J., James, K.O., Amoramn, J.D. (2020). Optimizing university education for sustainable economic development in Cross-Rivers state, Nigeria. *International Journal of benchmark (IJEB)*, 15(1), 1-15.
- Okonta, I. L. & Nwanokor, C. (2021). Extent of management of primary education in the 21st Century for sustainable development in Delta State, Nigeria. *UNIJerPS Unizik Journal of educational research and policy studies*. 2; 23-50. <https://unijerps.org> January-June, 2021 2021 Impact Factor: 5.641; 2020 Impact Factor: 5.355. Indexing and Impact Factor URL: <http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363>.
- Olawoyin, O. (2018, December 19) Nigeria's unemployment rate rises to 23.1% – NBS. Accessed 12th January 2019 from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/301896-nigerias-unemployment-rate-rises-to-23-1-nbs.html>
- Oluwajodu, F. Bbauw, D., Greyling, L., & Kleynhans, E.P.J. (2015). Graduate unemployment in South Africa: Perspective from the banking sector. *SA Journal of human resource management/ SA Tydskrif vir mensilkehulpbronbesturr*, 13(1), doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v13ii.656>.
- Omitogen, O. & Longe, A.E. (2017). Unemployment and economic growth in Nigeria in the 21st century: VAR Approach. *Acta Universitatis Danubius (Economica)*, (AUDCE), 13(5), 155-168.
- Osaat, D.S. & Emujakporue, E. (2023). Managing higher education for unemployment reduction in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. *Journal of education in developing areas (JEDA)*, 31(5), 80-90.
- Pereira, E. (2016). "Innovative and Entrepreneurship Education to skills. "Increase employability skills. "Proceedings of the European conference on innovation." P. 561.
- Pitan, O.S. (2016). Towards enhancing university graduate employability in Nigeria. *Journal of sociology anthropology*, 7(1), 1-11.
- Pitan, S.O. & Muller, C. (2023). Assessment of strategies for preparing graduates for the disruptive workplace. Evidence from Nigeria and South Africa, *Journal of teaching and learning for graduate employability*, 1(2), 1-14.
- Rowell, E. U., & Money, O. V. (2018). Financing education in Nigeria: Implications and options for national development. *World Journal of educational research*, 5(3), 227-239. Retrieved September 5, 2020 from www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/wjer
- Sharma, A. (2023). Consolidation of employability in Nepal: A reflective look. Industry and higher education. 09504222221511. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422222151138>.
- Stabbade, P. (2016). What makes a curriculum current and critical issues in curriculum and learning. UNESCO *International Bureau of education*, 1(2), 1-14.
- Suleiman, H. (2010). *Youth entrepreneurship education for national development international journal of education studies* 1 (1) 47-50.

- Sumanasiri, E. G.T., yajid, M.S.A., & Khatibi, A. (2015). Review of literature on graduate employability. *Journal of studies in education*, 3(3), 75-90. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jse.v5i3.7983>.
- Teixeira, P.N. (2014). Gary Becher's early work on human capital-collaborations and distinctives. *IZA Journal of labour economics*, 30(1), 1-20. Retrieved from <https://izajolespringeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40172-014-0012-2>. doi:10.1186/s40172-014-0012-2.
- Thapa, B. (2018). Industry involvement in curriculum development: A case study in Nepal. *Industry and higher education*, 32(3), 200-206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422219765887>.
- The World Bank. (2021). World development report 2021: Data for better lives. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2021>.
- Uchehu, C.A., Okeke-Onkonkwo, C.I, & Ifi, C.C. (2019). Improving business education programme through effective school-industry collaboration for Nation building. *Nigerian Journal of business education*, 6(1) 158-171.
- Ukachi, P. & Ejiko, S. (2018). Importance of vocational-technical education, in Present-day Nigerian Economy. *Global scientific Journals*. 6(8), 530-534.
- Upadhay, J., Tiwari, S., & Ghimire, D. (2018). Chapter 5 Disparity in higher education: A case for Nepal in J. Hoffman, P.M., Blessinger, S., Makhanya, S. International higher education teaching and learning association (Eds) Innovations in higher education teaching and learning, 12(1), 65-79. Emerald publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/2055-36412018000000/2006>. R
- Upadhyay, I.P. (2018). *Higher education in Nepal Pravaha*, 24(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.3126/pravaha.v24i1/20229>.
- Usman, H.N. (2017). Impact of entrepreneurship education on self-employment intention among business education students in universities in Kwara State. *Journal of assertiveness*, 12(1), 169-208.
- Yu-lung, P., Yuan, L., Wei-Ying, C., & Ke, W. (2024). Evaluation and optimization of sense of security during the day and night in campus. Public spaces based on physical environment and psychological perception. *Sustainability*, 18(2), 10.3390/su160312.