

## Towards Enhancing University Graduate Employability in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT** There is a concern worldwide that the current undergraduate curriculum is not producing graduates with the kind of professional and lifelong learning skills that they require to be successful in their jobs. This shortcoming has put increasing pressure on universities to enhance the employability of graduates by ensuring that university learning experiences translate into a fulfilling transition to the labor market. Considering the various challenges and the evidence of the lack of employable graduates in Nigeria, the focus of this paper is on how Nigerian universities can produce employable graduates for 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs. Using a desk review method, some definitions and earlier models of employability are discussed as a basis for a proposed model of enhancing university graduate employability. Its components can be embedded in the university curriculum. For successful implementation of the model, it is suggested that an enabling environment must be provided by the government, businesses and universities.

### INTRODUCTION

The extent to which university education is capable of producing potential employable graduates in the competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century world, is attracting the attention scholars and policymakers globally. This interest stems from two major concerns. First, there are signs that patterns of work are rapidly changing with new sectors emerging, and with technology, globalization and demographic changes significantly reforming the workforce (Oliver 2015; Pitan 2015). The implication of this change is that it is no longer enough for graduates to have a good degree 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).

The second concern is that the existing university curriculum is not producing graduates with the 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). Higher education in-

stitutions have 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), which consequently leads to the production of unemployable graduates.

In Nigeria, indications from past studies show that the high rate of unemployment experienced by university graduates is not only as a result of the unavailability of jobs, but also because of a dearth of candidates with employable skills that employers are looking for (Emeh et al. 2012; Pitan 2010, 2015). Evidence in support of this assertion shows that out of over 40 million unemployed youths in the country 23 million are unemployable possibly due to their lack of necessary skills for employment (Emeh et al. 2012). Also, a Central Bank of Nigeria official, Mahmood (2014), claimed that about seventy percent of the 80 million youths in Nigeria are either unemployed or underemployed. According to Akanmu (2011), many graduates who find work are not gainfully employed, and for those who found fulfilling employment in spite of everything, their employers raised serious concerns about their skills and fit for the job. Similarly, Pitan and Adediji (2012) revealed an overall skills mismatch of 60.6 percent among employed university graduates, with critical deficiencies in communication, information technology, decision-making, critical thinking, interpersonal relationship, entrepreneurial, technical and numeracy skills. The results of this study

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were consistent with those of other similar studies, such as those by Dabalén et al. (2001), the National Universities Commission (NUC) (2004) and Phillips Consulting (2014). The extent of mismatch as revealed in these studies further supported the fact that many of the university graduates in Nigeria were unemployable.

The notion of employability is a great challenge to the traditional concept of university education, and raises questions about the relevance of schooling at this level. Usually, it is the expectation of university graduates to get good and high-income jobs after graduation. According to Boeteng and Ofori-Sarpong (2002:39), “this expectation is rational from the perspective of human capital theory, which explains that the main determinant of the demand for higher education is the expectation of higher earnings over an individual’s lifetime, and higher income is necessary to compensate for the high costs associated with higher education”. But with the current problem where lack of employable skills contributes to unemployment (with all its attendant consequences, such as increases in the dependency ratio, poverty level, social ills and delinquent behavior and increases in recruitment costs), this expectation is a mere illusion for many graduates and society at large.

In view of the unemployability of graduates in Nigeria, as already discussed, this paper, which precedes further empirical research still to be completed, proposes a model of enhancing graduate employability. Although efforts have been made by scholars such as Knight and Yorke (2003), Pool and Sewell (2007), Bridgstock (2009), and Forrier et al. (2015) to develop models of employability in the context of their own curriculum and environment, none of these models seem completely appropriate for the Nigerian situation where the conditions of learning are quite different. In Nigeria, the available studies (such as Anho 2011; Ajiboye et al. 2013; Sodipo 2014; Adebakin et al. 2015) on employability are few, and such studies mostly list different generic skills and attributes that employers demand from graduates, and provide recommendations. They fail to discuss other components of employability and ways in which they can be developed or enhanced in students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The main focus of this paper is the prevailing situation of the unemployability of university graduates in Nigeria, which is a major contrib-

utory factor to unemployment in the country. There are indications that unemployment being experienced in Nigeria is structural in nature, that is, many graduates are unemployed for lack of skills necessary to fill the existing vacant positions and they are, therefore, unemployable. This situation is a big challenge for the relevance of university education, and thus, needs immediate attention. In light of this challenge, this paper investigates ways by which the university graduates’ employability skills can be enhanced.

### **Objective of the Paper**

The major objective of this paper is to propose a model of graduate employability enhancement in Nigeria. In achieving this objective, the following research questions, which reflect areas of concern in this paper, will be answered.

1. What is employability and what are employability skills?
2. What are the causes of university graduate unemployability in Nigeria?
3. In what ways can university graduates’ employability be enhanced?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The main approach for this paper was a desk review of available empirical and conceptual literature on the employability of graduates in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Desk research is basically the collection of data from existing resources such as academic publications, the Internet, the press, analytical and empirical reports and statistical publications. This is then followed by cross-referencing and the collation of data (Management Study Guide 2013). It has been proven to be very effective and can be conducted in the starting phase of a research project as most of the basic information can easily be collected and then used as a standard in the research process.

### **Answers to the Research Questions**

#### ***The Concepts of Employability and Employability Skills***

There is a certain degree of confusion over the concept of employability. It is a term used in a range of contexts with different meanings, and if not careful, the definition can lack clarity as an

operational concept (Hillage and Pollard 1998). For example, some researchers recognize the possession of generic skills as employability skills. Such a perception has been criticized for being too narrow (Harvey 2010; Bridgstock 2009). Generic skills include verbal and written communication skills, interpersonal skills, and analytical and critical thinking skills, which are all applicable in a range of contexts (Luk et al. 2014; Pitan 2015). It should be clear that generic skills are clearly subsets of employability skills, and the development of generic skills could lead to enhanced employability. Also, for many people, employability is the same thing as being employed (Harvey 2003; Pool and Sewell 2007). It should be noted that employability and employment do not have the same meaning and need to be distinguished. According to Weligamage (2009) and Oliver (2015), to be employed means having a job, while employability means the possession of necessary qualities to get employment, maintain it and progress in it. Thus, employability means more than just getting a job.

However, several other researchers (such as Hillage and Pollard 1998; Yorke and Knight 2006; Pool and Sewell 2007; Bridgstock 2009; Harvey 2010; Cavanagh et al. 2015; Oliver 2015) have conceptualized employability from a more holistic perspective, though in different contexts.

Yorke and Knight (2006: 3-5) see employability as “a set of achievements (skills, understandings and personal attributes) that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy”. Yorke and Knight proposed a framework for enhancing employability, which is popularly referred to as the USEM model. The USEM model summarizes employability as four interrelated components, these being understanding (of course of study and how organizations work), skillful practices (academic, employment, and life generally), efficacy beliefs (the student’s self-concept and self-belief), and metacognition (including self-awareness and a capacity to reflect on learning). However, the USEM model has been criticized on the basis that it is too academic in nature and that it fails to explain the exact meaning of employability to non-experts in the field, especially the students and their parents (Pool and Sewell 2007: 279).

Another definition, with an additional element, *satisfaction*, was offered by Pool and Sewell (2007: 280). They defined employability

“as having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose, secure and retain occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful”. Their argument is from the fact that an individual might be successful in his or her chosen profession without being satisfied. They also developed a model of employability known as CareerEdge. The CareerEdge model’s components include career education, experience, degree subject knowledge, generic skills, emotional intelligence, reflection and evaluation, and self-efficacy/self-confidence/self-esteem.

To Oliver (2015: 59), who refined Yorke and Knight’s (2006) definition, “employability means that students and graduates can discern, acquire, adapt and continually enhance the skills, understandings and personal attributes that make them more likely to find and create meaningful paid and unpaid work that benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy”. The “continuous enhancement” in this definition stresses the fact that employability is not static but a continuous process. No wonder lifelong learning is one of the characteristics of employability.

It is evident from the foregoing that the concept of employability transcends just the possession of both academic and generic skills, it also connotes the utilization and development of such assets and is a lifelong process. For the purpose of this paper, employability can be defined as the ability of graduates to possess and exhibit the knowledge, skills, attributes and attitudes needed to attain and maintain jobs in which they can be successful and fulfilled. It could be deduced then that employability skills consist of knowledge, attributes and attitudes that will enable students to get and maintain jobs in which they can be fulfilled not only in their occupations but in life as well. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the university (in conjunction with an institutionalized and a well-functioning career management service) to expose the students to the components of employability right from their early stage in the university (Cole and Tibby 2013).

### Causes of Unemployable University Graduates in Nigeria

Several factors that are inimical to producing employable graduates in Nigeria have been identified in the literature. Some of these factors are as discussed below.

### ***Poor Curriculum System***

The Nigerian university curriculum, just as the curricula of many other developing countries, has been criticized for not only lacking in content and quality, but also for being largely theoretical and overloaded, obsolete and disconnected from the labor market and therefore, inadequate to attend to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century students (Oldipo et al. 2009; Bamiro et al. 2013).

### ***Poor Learning Environment***

Nigerian universities are plagued by an unreliable electricity supply, grossly deficient and inadequate hostels, dilapidated lecture theatres and classrooms, and a lack of exposure to the latest computer software. Libraries are not well equipped, laboratories lack necessary apparatus and office accommodations are substandard (Oladipo et al. 2009; Asiyai 2013).

### ***Inadequate Funding***

There is underfunding for education in Nigeria especially in the area of capital expenditure. Bamiro et al (2013) pointed out that of all the challenges facing higher education institutions in Nigeria, none is more agonizing and persistent as the inadequate funding. Philips Consulting (2014) observed that while the United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommends that a minimum of twenty-six percent of a nation's yearly budget should be committed to the education sector, Nigeria contributes only 8.4 percent to the education sector. This has contributed largely to these institutions being characterized by poor infrastructures, overcrowded classrooms and incessant strikes, which consequently lead to the low quality of graduates being produced.

### ***Inadequate Collaboration between Universities and Employers of Graduates***

Despite the emphasis on the importance of collaboration between universities and employers of graduates, the role of employers in contributing to curriculum design and graduate recruitment has not been encouraging. The findings from the Philips Consulting (2014) showed that although a larger percentage of employers (69 percent) agreed that collaboration with

universities is essential, particularly through involvement in industrial training, most of them specified that their organizations have on no occasion collaborated with higher institutions in either graduate recruitment or curriculum design.

### ***Disparity between Employers' and Graduates' Views on Employability***

Nigerian graduates lack proper knowledge and orientation of the expectations of employers in the labor market. Empirical study by Philips Consulting (2014) showed that employers rated employability skills (effective communication, good attitude, and the ability to think critically and analytically, as well as the presentation of a good CV) as the most essential criteria for graduate employment while many graduates considered their qualification results as the most essential to employers. This also points to a deficiency in career services units in the universities.

### ***Dearth of Guidance Counseling and Career Services Units***

Empirical studies have shown that the services of guidance counselors are hardly rendered in the Nigerian universities. For example, Adebowale (2011) found that most institutions lack a guidance counseling unit, and where they exist, they are underutilized. Adebowale further stressed that in universities where guidance counseling units exist, they do not provide expected services because the professional counseling psychologists are not employed to manage its affairs. Such units are being staffed by administrative staff members who know nothing about professional counseling. In Adebowale's study, the responses from students from different universities showed that they have not been enjoying the guidance services that they expected, and that such services might not even be in operation.

### ***Inadequate and Unsatisfactory Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)***

In Nigeria there is provision for students (though not in all fields) to have work experience while in the university. The scheme is called the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), which intends to prepare and expose undergraduates to the industrial work situation,

which they are probably going to encounter after graduation. But unfortunately, the program is not performing as expected. Students either gain insufficient experience during the training or they are not involved at all. Major problems facing the SIWES program have been identified as rejection of students for industrial training by organizations, unavailability of vacancy in organizations, ineffective/inadequate supervision of students and insufficient funding of the program (Okechukwu and Robinson 2011; ITF Nigeria).

### ***Poor Commitment of Undergraduates to Developing Themselves***

The reality of the labor market is that it is becoming more competitive and congested as many more graduates enter it. University students do not understand this fact and as a result do not add value to their credentials (while in the university) in order to have a better chance to compete. For example, Kinash (2015) found out that it is often too late before many of the undergraduates realize the need for employability services.

### **Enhancing University Graduates Employability Skills**

#### ***Model of Graduate Employability Enhancement***

The proposed model of graduate employability as depicted in Figure 1 is adapted from other

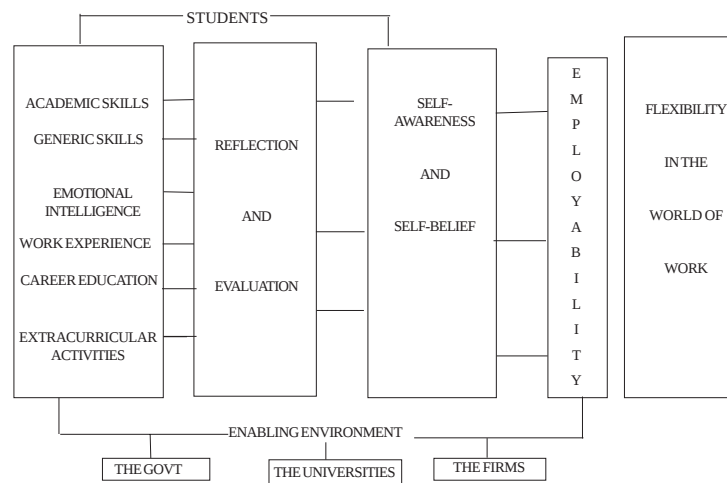
existing models such as the graduate employability development model by Harvey (2003), USEM model by Knight and Yorke (2003), DOTs model by Law and Watts (2003), the CareerEDGE model of graduate employability by Pool and Sewell (2007), and Theoretical model on the relationships between job transitions, movement capital and perceived employability by Forrier et al (2015) (see Pool and Sewell 2007; Cole and Tibby 2013). Apart from conceptual support, the proposed model is also based on empirical findings that students' engagement with each of the identified components will lead to enhanced employability.

The arrows explain the relationship between the different components in the model. It is assumed that if students are given an enabling environment by the government, firms and universities, it will be possible for them to develop the attributes on the extreme left, which if properly reflected on and assessed will lead to the development of self-awareness and self-belief. Possession of these skills and attributes will eventually lead to enhanced employability and flexibility in the labor market. The model is intended to serve as a guide to students, parents, teachers, career services officers, and universities.

### **DISCUSSION OF THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYABILITY**

#### **Academic Skills**

These are subject or discipline-specific skills and knowledge, which students must possess.



**Fig. 1. University Graduates Employability Model**

McLaughlin (1995) defined academic skills in relation to employability as “those skills that provide the basic foundation to get, keep, and progress in a job to achieve the best results”. The major reason for university education is to get a degree, which invariably should give its recipients an edge in the labor market. This assertion still holds today that the labor market favors those who have better academic qualification (Pool and Sewell). Some researchers refer to “academic skills” as technical skills. In imparting these skills, universities should identify the needs of the labor market in order to be able to provide students not only with relevant theoretical knowledge but also with practical experience, as proposed by Šooš and Jones (2015) in their model.

### **Generic Skills**

These are the knowledge, skills, and attributes that go beyond academic knowledge, and which are applicable in a variety of contexts as against vocational, technical or academic skills (Luk et al. 2014; Pitan 2015: 30). Generic skills are also referred to in the literature as “core skills”, “key skills”, “essential skills”, “soft skills” and “transferable skills”. Due to technological change and increasing globalization with strong competitiveness between firms, employers now want graduates who are competent technically and are also well equipped with relevant generic skills. The generic skills commonly demanded by all sectors as identified by employers in Nigeria are communication and analytical skills (Pitan 2015). Some of the other generic skills that employers require are interpersonal skills, organizing skills, the ability to translate ideas into action, and information technology skills (International Labor Organization (ILO) 2013; Sodipo 2014). Unfortunately, the employers’ responses from surveys carried out in Nigeria show that graduate employees lack many of these generic skills.

### **Career Education Activities**

In this model, these are activities that provide students with required career information, advice and guidance. This aspect is vital, as students need to acquire knowledge on the best way to explore the labor market so as to identify the available opportunities, learn how to pack-

age themselves well to employers, and how to make their career decisions. In this respect, institutionalized career service units in the universities are essential as they are expected to make these activities available to students. In fact, as Knight and Yorke (2003) observed, the university’s contribution to student employability in addition to its performance in general has much to do with the quality of its careers service. It has been observed that many students do not realize the need for career services until it is too late (Pitan and Adedjei 2014; Kinash et al. 2015); It is therefore, the responsibility of the school to orientate the students on the need for career education at their early stage in the university.

### **Work Experience**

Exposure to work experience during the degree program is a major mechanism, which enables students to establish a concrete relationship between theory and practice. Studies (such as Jackson 2015) on the relationship between work experience and employability have shown that employers value graduates who have participated in a work experience program. The responses from graduates and students who have participated in work placement programs also indicate that work experience gives students the opportunity to build on the foundation of knowledge acquired in the formal classroom situation (Lowden et al. 2011). Work experience helps them have a better understanding of the roles and expectations of their occupation, and engaging with professional practitioners enhances their confidence (Jackson 2015; Newton 2015). However, for maximum benefit from work experience there is need for closer communication between the university and industry, with increasing employer intervention in curriculum development (Apple 1995 cited in Chillas et al. 2015). To support this assertion, a study on the influence of various types of higher education employability skills programs on the graduates’ performance in the world of work showed that placements and involvement of employers in course design and delivery are the most effective of these programs (Mason et al. 2006; Lowden et al. 2011).

### **Participation in Extracurricular Activities**

Empirical studies such as those by Coladarsi and Cobb (1996), Lau et al. (2014) and Kinash

et al. (2015) have shown that students develop many of the generic skills through participation in (any form of) extracurricular activities, such as student union activities (if properly monitored by the institution's authorities), sports, religious, arts and music societies, and being a member of charity organizations or community development services. In their study, Lau et al. (2014) found that being a stable member of extracurricular activities affords graduates the opportunity to be responsible and develop leadership skills, when compared with those who are not stable members. According to Lau et al. (2014: 26), leadership skills are mostly developed from active participation in sports clubs, creativity skills from music clubs, while self-promotion skills and communication can be developed from all extracurricular activities. In their study, Kinash et al. (2015) interviewed career development professionals who confirmed that students who are engaged with sports and athletics while studying get better quality jobs more easily and they contribute more to society. Active involvement by students in these activities also boosts their self-awareness and self-esteem. Coladarci and Cobb (1996) found that participation in extracurricular activities (specifically, participation in academic clubs, arts, or sports) enhanced self-esteem, but their study did not ascertain any meaningful influence on academic achievement. Students, therefore, need to ensure that participation in extracurricular activities is not at the expense of their academic achievement.

### **Reflection and Assessment**

In this context, reflection and assessment have to do with having the opportunities for reflecting on and assessing the acquired learning experiences to improve performance. Reflection is thinking about what one has done and how it has helped one develop as a person, not just doing it (Lees 2002). Without these opportunities, students may not really give attention to the employability skills they have developed and what they have to do so as to develop them further (Pool and Sewell 2007). During the degree program, students need to reflect on their experiences and learn from them. They should take note of areas that need improvement and record this as they progress (Confederation of British Industry/National Union of Students (CBI/NUS) 2011).

### **Emotional Intelligence**

Goleman (1998: 317) defined emotional intelligence as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships." People who understand others' emotions and are able to regulate their own have been found to be more successful in interviews and in developing productive working relationships. An empirical study carried out by Coetzee and Beukes (2010), on the relationship between emotional intelligence and employability showed that a higher level of emotional intelligence brings about more confidence in exhibiting employability skills and behaviors. Another study carried out by Xu (2013) in China among college students, showed that the correlation of emotional intelligence and employability is significant, and that the level of emotional intelligence is an indicator of a student's employability. This correlation points to the fact that conceptualizing work in terms of relationships rather than achievements may make an individual more successful.

### **Self-awareness**

According to Law and Watts (2003), self-awareness involves an examination of one's actual and potential strengths in terms of personal abilities, qualities, practical skills, and physical strengths. It involves an exploration of one's limitations, personal needs, interests and aspirations. Ghayur and Churchill (2015) explain that self-awareness should involve getting to know oneself through a comprehensive analysis and understanding of one's own interests and motivations, work and family values, strengths and weaknesses, psychological characteristics, and lifestyle preferences. According to them the objective of the self-awareness process is to recognize and focus on one's most essential personal values and to be able to have a personal definition of success. Studies have shown that students who are engaged in proper self-exploration get more job interviews, perform better in job interviews, obtain more job offers, and are more effective in job performance (Greenhaus and Callanan 2006 cited in Ghayur and Churchill 2015).

### **Self-belief**

Self-belief, which is one's own belief in his or her competencies and abilities, is also one of

the factors that enhance an individual's employability. The three popular constructs of self-belief are self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to perform a task or achieve a goal in a particular situation. Self-confidence is having a trust or belief in oneself while self-esteem is one's overall opinion about himself. People with high self-esteem have a good self-image and the right attitude towards success. Turner (2014) believes that the well-established and most contextual construct of self-belief is self-efficacy. Studies have shown that job searching and other career behaviors have a positive correlation with self-efficacy (Makki et al. 2015). According to psychologist Bandura (1997), self-efficacy can be achieved through mastery experiences (such as work experience and making job applications), social modeling (for example, when graduates who have succeeded in their careers are invited to give talks to undergraduates on how they accomplished their goals), and social persuasion (when individuals are made to believe that they have the skills and abilities to succeed). Mastery experiences are the most effective way of developing a strong sense of self-efficacy (Kirk 2013; Chery 2015). Academia and parents need to assist students in developing positive self-belief through verbal encouragement that will help them overcome self-doubt and concentrate on putting in their maximum effort to a particular task. Curriculum that is designed to allow students timely and regular success in completing a task with regular and early feedback gives room for the development of self-belief (Turner 2015).

### **Enabling Environment**

In this model, the provision of an enabling environment is taken to be the responsibility of the government, the firms and the universities. This joint responsibility is because employability is not only a function of skills, subject knowledge, experience and personality traits of students, but is also a function of the curriculum, faculty and pedagogy in university systems, and also of the graduate employers (Sumanasiri et al. 2015). In their employability framework, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005: 207) referred to the factors that could contribute to an enabling environment as external factors. According to them, these factors include "the attitudes of employ-

ers towards the unemployed, the supply and quality of training and education, the availability of other assistance for disadvantaged job seekers...and (most importantly) the supply of appropriate jobs in the local economy". According to United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2014), students and teachers are psychologically affected by the surrounding physical and social conditions that may disrupt or enhance the quality and effectiveness of learning. It is important that every student is guaranteed an environment (both within and outside the institution's environment) that is physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling. For students to learn well and develop employability skills, there is need for provision of an enabling environment such as well-equipped libraries and laboratories, good and conducive hostel accommodation, constant electricity supply, access to career services, and a good attitude of employers towards attachment students. The role of the government in the provision of enabling environment for students is majorly in the area of adequate provision of funds for the universities. Although, there is a scarcity of literature on the nexus between employability and an enabling environment in Nigeria, there is evidence of a disabling environment for teaching and learning in Nigerian universities, some of which have been discussed previously in this paper

### **CONCLUSION**

The main focus of this paper is to propose a model for enhancing university graduate employability in Nigeria. In an attempt to do this, a few definitions and earlier models of employability by different researchers were discussed, and several challenges related to employability in Nigeria were also considered. From the literature review, it can be deduced that employability is a complex concept, which has both narrow and broader definitions.

The conclusion of this paper from the various definitions is that employability is the ability of graduates to possess and exhibit the knowledge, skills, attributes and attitudes needed to get and maintain jobs in which they can be successful and fulfilled, and it is the responsibility of the university in conjunction with an institutionalized and a well-functioning career management service to expose the students to the

components of employability to support their lifelong learning.

A further component, an enabling environment, was introduced into the proposed model of graduate employability. This component suggests that for enhanced graduate employability, there is the need for an enabling environment, which must be provided by the relevant stakeholders including the universities, industry and the government (especially in the area of funding).

For further study, the relationship between employability and each of the components of the model could be subjected to empirical tests to examine the workability of the model.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

From the issues raised in the proposed model of graduate employability, the following are recommended for all the stakeholders in university education in Nigeria.

First, there is a need for lecturers to design ways of incorporating the components of employability into their teaching methods. This could be achieved by consciously laying more emphasis on practical work and real life situations than on theory. Generic skills could be taught by paying particular attention to simulations, group projects, individual projects, seminar sessions, field trips and visits to firms. The lecturers could also assist in developing self-confidence, self-esteem and emotional stability in their students through their methods of assessment and comments on students.

Second, work experience during the degree program should be made mandatory for students in all fields at least twice before graduating. The government should sensitize and mandate employers in the private sector not to reject students and graduates sent to them for industrial training and the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC). Even if the government or the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) is not going to be responsible for work experience in all fields of study (as the case is now), it is important for the university to give information and guidance to students as to how their industrial training, whether it is organized by the university or on a voluntary basis (like unpaid charitable job) could be used as employability enhancement.

In addition, there should be functioning career service units in all the universities. The university authorities and the National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure the es-

tablishment (where they do not already exist), appropriate staffing and close monitoring of career services units. Such units will be responsible for providing career development services to students and creating contact with employers and alumni.

Also, there should be a strong university-industry relationship. This recommendation is in line with the literature, which indicates that involvement of employers in design and delivery of university courses has positive influence on the graduates' ability to find graduate-caliber jobs within six months of graduation. In view of this, the universities and their various departments should maintain ongoing communication with the industry, especially in areas of curriculum development, inviting employers to speak to students about employment opportunities and requirements and observation of sabbaticals in industries by university lecturers.

More importantly, students should engage in employability activities at an early stage while at university. They should be open to learning, participate in work experience (this may mean sacrificing holidays for unpaid jobs), and join in extracurricular activities (like clubs, societies, competitive sports and student union activities). They should record their skills and experiences and effectively explain them to others.

Nevertheless, employers need to understand that considerable employability-related learning occurs at the workplace, and after all, employability is a lifelong learning process. Therefore, they should be willing to commit some money to the training and retraining of their new graduates and give them time to adjust to the new demands of their jobs.

Finally, the provision of an enabling teaching and learning environment, especially in the areas of well-equipped and modern laboratories, libraries, lecture rooms and lecture theatres, hostel facilities, staff offices and other basic infrastructure, is germane to the enhancement of graduate employability. But, for this to be a reality, the Nigerian government has to commit more financial resources (which should be in the form of capital expenditure, rather than recurrent expenses) to university education.

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