



Deficiencies in Elected Course Requirements and Change of Course in the University: Implications for Employability

¹Onuekwusi Chijioke, ¹Onyeka, Joy, N. & ²Iwuanyanwu, Obianuju C.

¹Department of Educational Psychology/G&C
Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri

²Department of Primary Education
Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri

Corresponding authors: chijiokeonuekwusi@yahoo.com
joynonyeka@yhao.com

Abstract

This study investigated the types of deficiencies in elected course requirements of 190 University entrants and the patterns of change to other courses. It was a case study achieved through documentary survey. Four research questions guided the study. Simple percentages were used in the analysis of data. Findings indicate that the major cause of deficiency was inability of University entrants to get up to a credit pass in relevant subjects (76.3%), followed by failure to sit for relevant subjects in qualifying examinations (20%) Furthermore, there was no discernable pattern of acceptance of change of courses. The paper therefore argues that the practice of sudden change of courses for entrants without adequate career guide could have serious implications for employability. It recommends establishment of efficient and effective Guidance and Counselling units in Nigerian Universities and insistence that such entrants should receive remedial career guide prior to change of course.

Keywords: Requirements, Change of Course and Employability,

Introduction

The related issues of unemployment, underemployment and unemployability of Nigerian graduates have bothered many concerned stakeholders. Tejvan (2010) sees unemployment as a situation where someone of working age is not able to get a job but would like to be in full time employment. Creed and More(2006) Underemployment is a situation where a worker is employed but not in the desired capacity, in terms of compensation, working hours or level of skill and experience. Yorke (2004) sees employability as a set of achievements-skills, understandings and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation, which benefits themselves the workforce, the community and economy. Similarly, Malcolm (2023) posits that employability involve demonstrable skills and competencies that a graduate must have in order to gain employment.

Dambatta and Salman (2014) assert that employability of graduates depend largely on the

quality of products; the more qualitative the product is, the more chance of being employable. It is however important to quickly indicate here that the issue of quality graduates should start from input to process in order to get quality product. In a related view Lukman, Ogunjimi and Babatunde (2015) explain that unemployability occurs when there is a mismatch; a situation that occurs when the educated young person becomes disadvantaged because the skills learnt in the University are not relevant in the labour market. This is a serious situation that demands the critical attention of all stakeholders in the education system. Decrying the pitiable situation, Kanu (2011) lamented that a high percentage of young graduates are said to be unemployed for lack of needed skills that would make them profitable for any employer. From this perspective high unemployment rate is a function of unemployability of graduates. It can therefore be deduced while unemployment can be reduced by creating more job opportunities, unemployability is a more serious issue that casts doubt on the efficiency and effectiveness of our institutions of



learning. In light of this concern raised many educationists including Kanu (2011), Okwilagwe and Falaye (2014) and Onuekwusi and Agoha (2015) have blamed the situation of non acquisition of appropriate employable skills by University graduates on their claim that what is taught, methods of teaching and methods of assessment of relevant skills, knowledge and values needful for employability are efforts that expose learners to mere acquisition of knowledge for the sake of it. Kanu (2011) posit that the reason is simply because educators in our institutions of learning are concerned with theories and abstract instruction rather than re-engineering students to develop their intrinsic potentials. Mkpae, Obowu and Chikwe (2013) aver that limited skills acquisition during training in universities in Nigeria has remained a serious impediment in terms of employability of our graduates.

Lukman, Ogunyimi and Bbatunde (2015) posits that Intrinsic potentials are those abilities and attitudes which an individual possesses and which when properly developed through university curriculum can give him useable knowledge, disposition and skills in chosen careers. While not contending this view, it is important to consider the fact that the process of preparing employable graduate should start from admitting those who possess the requisite intrinsic potentials. It becomes imperative that efforts be made to admit the right individual for the right courses. In the words of Mkpae, Obowu and Chikwe, (2013) we should ensure they are qualified physically, mentally and academically for their chosen course of study. This very important especially when we consider that there are two broad aims of secondary education in Nigeria namely; "preparation for useful living within the society" and "preparation for higher education" (FRN 2014:18). To achieve these aims, the Federal Government realizes the need for Guidance and Counselling Programme towards influencing secondary school students to attain the expected goals (FRN 2014:53) Guidance Counsellors are expected to assist students choose subject that will lead to the attainment of their career aspirations. They are also expected to help students select appropriate subject combinations in the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). The guide to career choices at the tertiary institutions are expected to be based on the students' ability and interest determined with use of various kinds of psychological tests that will show students inclinations. However this assumption appears not to be the case.

In a study by Adadu, Inaje and Ekpenyong (2007), Njoku(2007)and Onuekwusi (2009) findings are that the Nigerian Secondary School Guidance and Counseling Programme is not effective, thus creating gap in education at that level. It is also a worrisome practice in some Nigeria Universities that when prospective students are unable to gain admission into their elected courses due to one or more deficiencies in the pre requisite entry certificates, there is a mad rush to 'fix' the individuals into any of the available courses as remarked by Ogunmakin, Agbayewa and Osakyade (2014) and Onuekwusi (2009). This is perhaps unfortunately done without considering the students' interests or aptitude for such courses. The effect of neglect of such consideration as stated above can be enormous especially in the area concerning determining the intrinsic potentials of the entrants to acquire the skills, knowledge and disposition essential for making careers out of the courses. The writers are of the view that it is perhaps possible that this practice subtly contributes to the issue of unemployability amongst Nigerian graduates. The fundamental concern in this view is that this initial zeal to gain admission into any course to be identified as an undergraduate might die soon and the entrant might realize that he or she is in the wrong place. Such a mistake may likely have adverse consequences on the students' psychology. The dangers of having such students in our campuses are numerous. It can affect their performances and overall studentship including their postgraduate ability to be employable.

The concern of this work is therefore to determine the types of deficiencies in elected course requirements and patterns of change of course amongst University entrants. The term 'Elected Course' in this study is the course chosen and indicated in Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) Form by the candidate. This study is guided by the following research questions.

Research Questions

1. What are the types of deficiencies in elected course requirements of the prospective University entrants?
2. Which is the major type of deficiency in elected course requirement of the prospective University entrants?
3. What are the proportions of male and female prospective entrants that had deficiencies in elected course requirements?
4. What are the patterns of change of courses among the prospective University entrants?

Method

The documentary survey case study design was used for the study. The design is appropriate because it enables the collection of relevant data for the study. The population consisted of all the 190, 2008/2009 first year students of a Imo State University in Nigeria who opted for and got approval for change of course through purchase and filling of change of course forms. The study used all the students. The number is small and so

no sampling was done. The instrument for data collection was a proforma designed by the researchers to obtain the relevant information for the study from the completed change of course forms. Information relating to variables of investigation included (i) gender(ii) O' level result (iii) Elected course on admission (iv) Nature of deficiency and (v) course of change.

Simple percentages were used in the analysis of data

Results

Tables 1-9 show the sub-numbers of students, gender, types of deficiency in requirements for elected courses according to faculties to which changes were made. **Table 1: Faculty of Business Administration**

S/N	Gender		Types of Deficiency			Faculty of Elected Course	
	M	F	Failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects	Failure to sit for relevant subject	Obtained result at two sittings		
17	11	6	12	5	-	Science	5
						Environnemental science	3
						Law	2
						Social Science	2
						Agric and Veterinary medicine	2
						Engineering	1
						Humanities	1
						Medicine and health science	1

Table 1 reveals that all the changes are interfaculty, from 8 different faculties to faculty of Business Administration

Table 2: Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine

N	Gender		Types of Deficiency			Faculty of Elected Course	
	M	F	Failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects	Failure to sit for relevant subject	Obtained result at two sittings		
5	2	3	3	1	1	Education	3
						Medicine and health science	2
						Humanities	1

All five changes are inter faculty changes from 3 different faculties to faculty of Agriculture and Vetinary Medicine



Table 3: Faculty of Education

N	Gender		Types of Deficiency			Faculty of Elected Course	
	M	F	Failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects	Failure to sit for relevant subject	Obtained result at two sittings		
35	14	21	29	6	-	Education	29
						Business administration	2
						Agriculture and veterinary Medicine	2
						Engineering	1
						Humanities	1

Out of 35 changes, 29 are intra faculty while 6 are interfaculty from four different faculties.

Table 4: Faculty of Humanities

N	Gender		Types of Deficiency			Faculty of Elected Course	
	M	F	Failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects	Failure to sit for relevant subject	Obtained result at two sittings		
29	16	13	22	7	-	Humanities	20
						Social Science	5
						Science	1
						Law	1
						Business administration	1
						Environmental Science	1

Out of 29 changes, 20 are intra faculty while 9 are inter faculty from 5 different faculties

Table 5: Faculty of Medicine and Health Science

N	Gender		Types of Deficiency			Faculty of Elected Course	
	M	F	Failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects	Failure to sit for relevant subject	Obtained result at two sittings		
8	4	4	5	-	3	Medicine and Health Science	8

All the 8 changes are intra faculty changes



Table 6: Faculty of Engineering

N	Gender		Types of Deficiency	Failure to sit for relevant subject	Obtained result at two sittings	Faculty of Elected Course
	M	F				
1	1		Failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects	-	-	Environmental science 1

The lone change is inter faculty change

Table 7: Faculty of Science

N	Gender		Types of Deficiency	Failure to sit for relevant subject	Obtained result at two sittings	Faculty of Elected Course
	M	F				
39	16	23	Failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects	9	3	Science 21 Medicine and Health Science 5 Engineering 6 Environmental science 4 Agriculture and veterinary Medicine 3

Out of 39 changes, 21 are intra faculty while 18 are inter faculty from 4 different faculties

Table 8: Faculty of Environmental Sciences

N	Gender		Types of Deficiency	Failure to sit for relevant subject	Obtained result at two sittings	Faculty of Elected Course
	M	F				
39	13	26	Failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects	8	-	Social Science 18 Business Admin. 15 Science 3 Agric and Vet. Med. Education 1 Medicine and Health science 1

Out of 39 changes, 18 are intra faculty changes while remaining 21 are interfaculty changes from 5 faculties

Table 9: Faculty of Social Science

N	Gender		Types of Deficiency	Failure to sit for relevant subject	Obtained result at two sittings	Faculty of Elected Course
	M	F				
17	17	-	Failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects	2	-	Environmental Science 9 Engineering 5 Science 2 Business Administration 1

Out of 17 changes, 9 are intra faculty changes while 8 are interfaculty from 3 faculties

Table 10: Summary of Results

S/N	Characteristics of Students	Number (n)	Proportion in Percentage (%)
1	Total number of students	190	100
2	Males	94	49.5
3	Females	96	50.5
4	Those who failed to get up to credit pass in relevant subject (s)	145	76.3
5	Those who Failed to sit for relevant subject(s)	38	20
6	Those who were unable to obtain result at two sittings (for courses in Medicine and Health Sciences)	7	3.7

S/N	Types of Change	Number (n)	Proportion
1	Intra faculty change	105	55.3%
2	Inter faculty change	85	44.7%

Summary of Findings/Answers to Research Questions

1. Three causes of deficiency identified are namely; failure to get up to credit pass in relevant subjects, failure to sit for relevant O' level subjects and failure to obtain credit pass at one sitting.
2. The major type of deficiency in elected course requirements of students is failure to obtain up to a credit pass in one or more of the required subjects. Out of 190 students, 145 which is 76.3% had this predicament.
3. 38 students which is 20% of the sample of study did not sit for one or more relevant subjects in the requisite certificate examinations.
4. 96 female students which is 50.5% and 94 male students which is 49.5% of the sample had one type of deficiency or the other with the elected course requirements.
5. 105 changes which is 55.3% are intra faculty while 85 which is 44.7% were inter faculty.
6. There is no discernable pattern of change of course as entrants accepted change to courses for which they had the requisite requirements.

Discussion and Implications of the Findings

Findings of this study indicate that the major cause of deficiency was inability of University entrants to get up to a credit pass in relevant subjects (76.3%), followed by failure to sit for relevant subjects in qualifying examinations (20%) and inability to obtain result in one sitting for courses in nursing and health sciences. The finding such as inability to sit for requisite subjects in qualifying examinations strongly reveal gaps in career guide of the students. Furthermore, a situation where prospective University students who elected for science courses failed two or three of the basic subjects namely: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics calls for serious concern. Such individuals possibly belong to the group who according to Uzoeshi and Ekwe (2007) are ignorant of their potentials. This situation has serious implications for graduate employability. In agreement with the view, Ogunmaka Agabyena and Osakuade (2014) aver that lack of career orientation is one of the major factors responsible for graduate unemployability in Nigeria.

The finding that the entrants opted for and were granted change of courses within or out of their faculties of first choice without remedial career guide undoubtedly compounds the problem. One cannot assume that at this critical choice point such individuals have considered their interest and ability for the courses. Ogunmaka, Agbayena and Osakuade (2004) observe that many students find themselves reading science courses which they did not plan for just to avoid

staying idle at home. This is very unfortunate as these students might have been boxed into such courses when they could have made excellent careers in other areas if they had received proper guide. From the discussion, it is important for all concerned to realize that even when employability skills have been successfully built in our given curricula and suitable pedagogy approaches are packaged, success in getting employable university products depends on the interest and ability of the learners for various courses.

Conclusion

The study revealed three types of deficiency in elected course requirements in both male and female entrants and there is no discernable pattern of change of course for them. The findings in this study are pointers to gaps in career guide amongst secondary school leavers and University entrants. It is important to realize that such students might not have been well positioned to acquire the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes to become employable after graduation. Therefore, whatever strategy is put in place to address the problem of graduate employability by Nigeria governments and universities should include efforts to admit students into courses that are congruent to their intrinsic potentials. -

Recommendations

1. The Universities in Nigeria should establish effective Guidance and Counseling Programme where such students as identified by this study could receive remedial career guide.
2. Since student's career choice cannot be successfully settled at choice point, the decision to change course for prospective students should emanate from the Guidance and Counseling unit after successful sessions with concerned students.
3. The government and other stakeholders should provide enough funds needed to equip an efficient and effective University Guidance and Counseling programme.

References

- Adadu, P.M. Inage A & Ekpenyong, P. (2007). Effective implementation of Guidance Counselling curriculum in the cross River Stat Public secondary school 31st Annual Nation conference of CASSON.
- Creed, P & More, K. (2006). Social support, social undermining and coping in underemployed and unemployed persons. *Journal of Social Psychology* (36) 321-339. Doi 10-111/j0021-20292006. 00010x.
- Dambatta, B.U & Salman, M.F (2014) Mathematics Teacher Preparation in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges for Functional Educations and Graduate Employability. *Nigeria Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation* 13(3)1-10.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). National Policy on Education Lagos NERC press.
- Kanu, J.A. (2011). Updating the Technical and Professional Skills of teachers: A panacea for Human Capital Development *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation* 10(3) 115-120.
- Lukman, S.A, Ogunyimi, M.O & Babatunde P.A (2015). Undergraduates Training Experiences and employability in Imo State. *Journal of Education Foundations*. University of Ilorins in Press.
- Malcolm, T. (2023). Employability: a core role of higher education? *Research in post-compulsory Education* Issue 4 (28) 551-571. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2023.2253649>
- Mkpae, S.G., Obowu, V.A. & Chikwe, C.K. (2013). Evaluating job recruitments and graduate employability in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation*, 12, 32-42.
- Njoku, O.C. (2007). Optimization of service delivery in Nigerian secondary schools. The contributions of Guidance Counselling Services in B.G. Nwogu Ed. Optimization of service delivery in the education sector. Issues and strategies. Pp72-76. Nsukka University Trust Publisher.
- Ogunmakin A.O, Agbayewa J.O & Osakuade J.O (2014) Enhancing Employability Skills Among Nigerian University Science Graduates. *Nigeria Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation*. 130-142.
- Okwilagwe E.A & Falaye, F.V.(2014). Institutional Response to the problem of Graduate Employability in South West, Nigeria. *Nigeria Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation*. 11-12.
- Onuekwusi, C.N (2009) Analysis of Causes of Deficiency in Elected Course Requirement: Implications for Guidance and Counselling. *The Compendium: Journal of Education and contemporary issues* 1 (1) Owerri Joe Mankpa pub, 154-165.
- Onuekwusi, C.N & Agoha T.C (2015) Perception and validity of Assessment by Entrepreneurship Educators in selected Tertiary Institutions in Imo State, *Nigeria Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation*, 14(2) 65-73.
- Tejvan, P (2010). Economics HELP-Helping to simplify Economics Retrieved from www.econornics.heIporg/...unemployment.
- Uzoeshi, K.C.& Ekwe, A.O (2007). Guidance and Counselling: Roadmap to Appropriate Career Choice. *Alvan School of Education Journal (ASEJ)* 5(1) 65-78.
- Yorke, M. (2004). 'Employability in Higher Education: what it is-what it is not'. Higher Education Academy/ESECT. Retrieved from <http://www.employability.ac.uk/what/>.