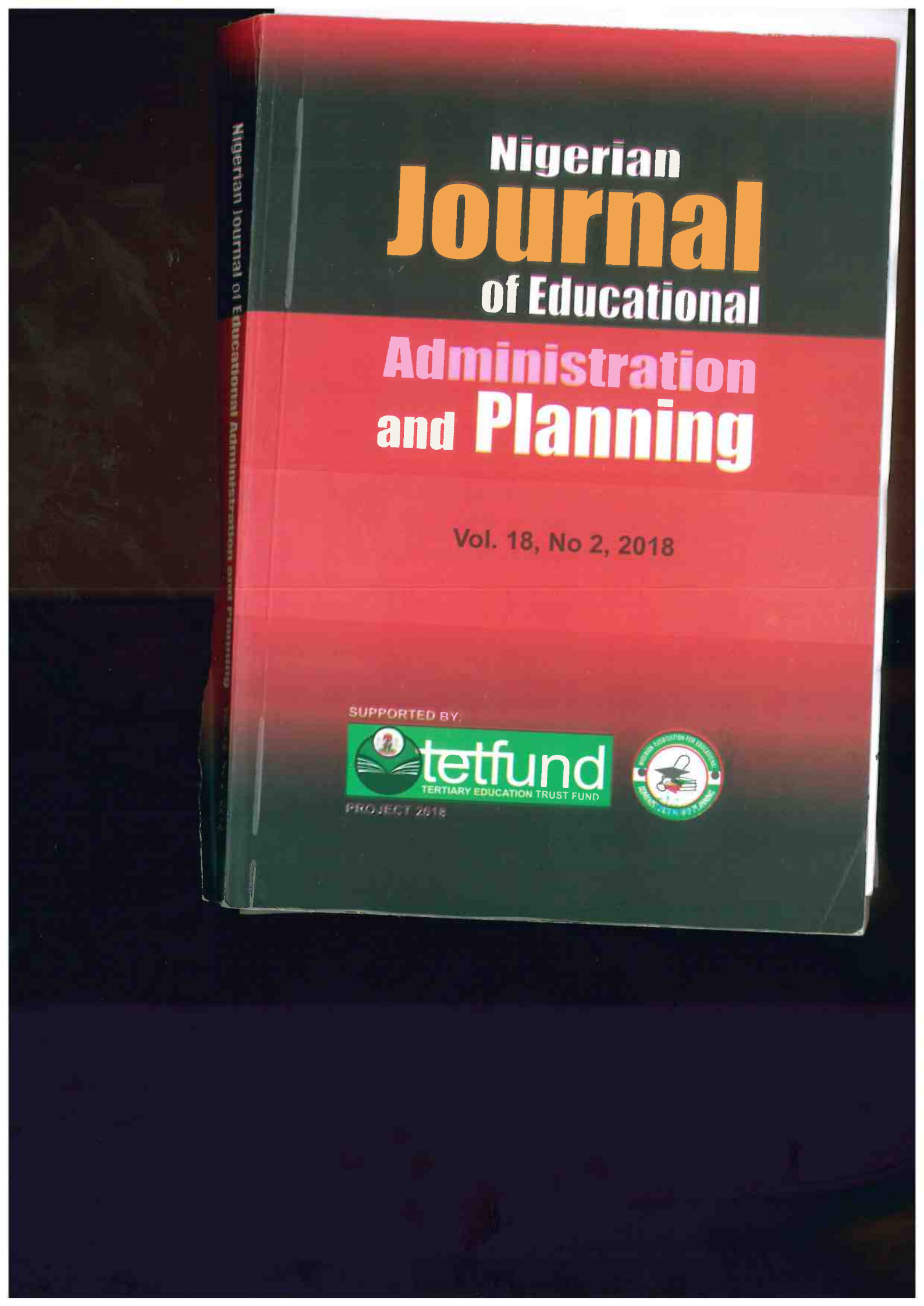

Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration and Planning
Nigerian
Journal
of Educational
Administration
and Planning
Vol. 18, No 2, 2018
SUPPORTED BY
tetfund
TERTIARY EDUCATION TRUST FUND
PROJECT 2018

Restructuring Nigeria University Curriculum for Graduates Employability in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined restructuring higher education study for graduates' employability using Universities in Ilorin Kwara State, Nigeria as case study. The purposes of the study was to examine the link between Nigerian University curriculum and graduate employment, identify specific societal needs in relation to University curriculum, examine employability of the Nigeria University curriculum and identify ways of restructuring the University curriculum in meeting societal challenges. The indicator used to measure graduate employability was University curriculum in two out of the four Universities in Kwara State. This study is a descriptive survey and the sample of the study was drawn from two universities purposely selected out of the four Universities in Kwara State for the study. Random sampling technique, was used to select 230 respondents for the study out of 1630. Four research questions were asked and one hypothesis was raised for the study. An instrument; Assessment of Restructuring Higher Education Study for Graduate Employability Questionnaire (ARHESGEQ) was used to collect relevant data for the study. The findings of the study revealed that the current university curriculum does not address the occupational needs of the nation. Based on this finding the following recommendations were made in restructuring higher education study for graduate employment. University curriculum should be developed in such a way that it will

cater for specific societal needs such as developing justice, equity, social welfare, social security and equality, curriculum planners should endeavor to plan the curriculum so as to cater for psychological and mental well being of all students rather than their intellectual and moral skills alone, university curriculum should be re-design in such a way that strive to cultivate entrepreneurial skill in the student rather than celebrating outstanding intellectual performance without employable skills and it was also recommended that curriculum of universities should be restructured to enable students develop entrepreneurial skills and as such be able to create wealth for themselves

Key words: Curriculum, Restructuring, Higher Education and Employability

Introduction

Higher education according to National Policy on Education (2004) is the education given after Secondary Education in Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses. The university is established to carry out three functions that are crucial for the continuous growth and development of the society namely- teaching, research and community service. Given this mandate, the learning that takes place in our higher educational institutions according to Babalola and Jaiyeoba (2008) should result in producing graduates who are technically equipped and morally prepared to become productive workers, self-reliant entrepreneurs, and responsible parents, selfless and good citizens. Odugbesan (2004) observes that apart from the core business of imparting knowledge, the essence of a university is to prepare a pool of experts to meet the dynamics of human resource requirements of society. While Okonkwo (2007) maintains that tertiary education should provide learners with skills, knowledge and competencies in order to become viable in the world of works.

The main objective of establishing tertiary institution in any society notwithstanding, one major reason why youths invest their time and money to get education is to position them for paid employment. The realization of this aspiration over the years has gradually become more difficult to attain. The reason is the high rate of unemployment prevalent in the Nigerian economy especially among youths with university education in Kwara State. Generally, Nigeria is faced with a two-fold problem with regards to employment issue. First is the

challenge of absorbing the already produced graduates into the labour market, second is producing quality graduates from the tertiary institutions with the required competences for the various sectors of the economy. The consequence of this state of affair both on the economic and social levels is properly captured by the deputy governor (financial sector surveillance), Central Bank of Nigeria, Mr. Tunde Lemo as cited in Olanrewanju(2008) who asserted that the consequences of growing unemployment, particularly graduate unemployment, are so damning that no economy can afford to ignore it.

Research evidence and comments from the public indicts the universities for not fulfilling her mandate of producing quality graduates but are rather turning out half-baked, ill-equipped graduates who cannot meet the expectations of society (Babalola, 2007). Commenting on this problem, Olanrewaju (2008) reports that Mr. Tunde Lemo during the 2nd anniversary lecture of the Tai Solarin University of Education traced the inability of the nation's commerce and industry to absorb the multiplied thousands of graduates annually turnedout by the institutions in Nigeria to include factors such as mismatch between the curricular and economic needs, the skewed production of graduates in Arts and Social Sciences rather than Science and Technology where they are needed most, poor funding of the education sector and falling standard of education. A study by Dabalen, Oni and Adekola (2000) showed that employers complained that skills of Nigerian graduates had steadily declined between 1990 and 2000 and thus, these graduates have become increasingly unproductive on the job.

The position of employers and graduates on adequacy of training notwithstanding, the crucial issue remainthose indices that indicate the quality of programmes cannot be ignored or overlooked in discussing the quality of the participants of such programmes. It is against this background, that this study choosing Universities in Kwara state as case study, sought answers from the trainees (Students) on the adequacy or otherwise of the University curriculum and the need for its restructuring in meeting National employment challenges.

Restructuring Higher Education Study

Restructuring refers to a change and improvement in existing practice. Reform in higher education therefore implies a change and improvement in different aspects of education at tertiary level. Higher education I acquired at the third level of Nigerian education in

universities, polytechnic, monotechnics, colleges of education and institutions offering correspondence course (FRN, 2004). It has witnessed series of reforms during the administration of colonial, military and civilian government in the country. This is not surprising because education, as an instrument of change, should not remain static. Moreover, the society is a dynamic one, and education too has to be dynamic in order to serve it adequately. In Government's reform agenda at any period of national development, the central theme is 'relevance'. According to Obanya (2006), 'relevance' determines the use which a society would make of educational opportunities. He states further that investment into education is likely to yield a high dividend if the education is relevant to the need of the society. Therefore, it is not surprising, that the Government continued to embark on education reforms in pursuit of what l relevant to the societies.

For instance, the report of Ashby Commission in 1959 contained specific recommendations on higher education reform in Nigeria. It gave birth to new universities, who curricular and mode of operations differs from that of the existing University College, Ibadan (Adeshina, 2005). Also, the Government introduced series of innovations into Nigerian higher education system with the conception and implementation of the National Policy on Education in 1977. Moreover, many changes were introduced into Nigerian higher education system in the last decade of the 20th century. During this period, Ezekwezili (2006) observed that the nation's education sector at all levels was suffering from a systematic dysfunction. As the Federal Minister of Education, at that time, she embarked on education reforms through which she proposed to bring sanity into the system.

Federal Government's reforms in higher education include resuscitation of National Open University of Nigeria, introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for teaching, learning and research; Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), Post UTME screening and Teachers Registration Council. The Federal Government also stipulated that Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) would be the minimum teaching qualification and encouraged all teachers to be professionally qualified. Granting of license to some college of education and polytechnics for award of degree was also a reform on higher education in Nigeria (FRN, 2004 and Babalola, 2007). Reform continued to be initiated and implemented as people and government see the need for it. Moreover, technological development has drawn nation, cities and villages closer

to one another, and changes in one place quickly affect other places. As observed by Omolewa (2008), people are constantly motivated by a desire for change, an eagerness for transformation and a conscious search for progress and development.

Two major problems are identified on the initiation and implementation of restructuring in Nigerian higher educational institutions are that; the reforms are imported from foreign countries (especially America and Europe) and adopted without finding out their relevance to the society. This was the practice during the colonial era and it continued till today. Also, there has not been holistic approach to most of the reforms. This implies that reforms are initiated and implemented without considering their consequences on other aspects of the education system and in the entire society. Education is an open system with many parts and units which depend on one another. Additionally, education constitutes a subsystem in the entire society and whatever happens to it will have impacts on other parts of the society.

It is clear that any reform to be initiated in higher education should be relevant if resources are not to be wasted. In order to determine the level of relevance, certain criteria are to be considered. Obanya (2006) stated that, historical, social-cultural, geographical, and psychological factors are criteria for determining relevance of any reform in education. Others are early warning signals, currency and futuristic factors.

Statement of the problem

It is no longer a story, because it has become of general knowledge that, graduates of universitis in Nigeria now go about without job. Several reasons have being advanced for this situation, prominent among which is the mismatch between the curricular of higher institutions and the economic reality of the nation. Must of the courses studied in Nigerian higher institutions today negate the basic employment needs of the society. Hence, the need to re-examine and restructure higher education study for graduate employability.

Studies such as that provided by Dabalen, Oni and Adekola (2000), Olanrewaju (2008) and Okkonkwo (2007) opined that the trend of unemployment of higher institution graduates is increasing astronomically. They narrowed the reason to the curricular of higher education study. This study therefore, advanced on the trends of these previous studies by exploiting an opportunity of studying the restructuring Nigeria university curriculum as a correlate of graduate employability in Kwara state, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This study was on restructuring higher education study for graduate employability. Specifically, the purposes of the study are to;

1. examine the link between Nigeria University curriculum and graduate employment.
2. identify specific societal needs in relation to University curriculum intervention
3. examine the employability of the Nigeria University Curriculum.
4. identify ways of restructuring the University curriculum in meeting societal challenges.

Research Questions

From the objectives, the study has generated the following questions:

1. What is the link between Nigeria University curriculum and graduate employment?
2. What are the specific societal needs in relation to University curriculum intervention?
3. What is the relevance of Nigerian university curriculum to graduate employability?
4. What are the ways of restructuring the University curriculum to meet societal challenges?

Research Hypothesis

This hypothesis set to guide the study.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between Nigeria University curriculum and graduate employability in Universities in Kwara state, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive survey. The study focused only on the six universities in Kwara state. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two Universities out of the six Universities, these two universities were considered must suitable for the study because they are public universities and also offer more courses when compared to the remaining four universities.Stratified sampling technique was used to select 150 out of 1230 students from University of Ilorin and 80 out of 350 students from Kwara State University which makes 230 respondents. Restructuring the curriculum was tested by the employability of the Nigerian university curriculum and the specific

societal needs as regards the Nigerian University curriculum. An instrument; Assessment of Restructuring Higher Education Study for Graduate Employability Questionnaire (ARHESGEQ) was designed for the study. The instrument was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation in the Department of Social Science Education University of Ilorin. Additionally, reliability test was conducted on the instruments using test re-test method, where the instrument was first administered to some group of respondents in Al-Hikma University and re-administered after an interval of three weeks. The outcome of the correlated reliability test was 0.86, this was considered high enough and the instrument was considered suitable for the study. Pearson Product-moment Correlation statistics was used to test the hypothesis formulated in this study at 0.05 level of significance, while percentage was used in analyzing the outcomes of the research questions.

Answering Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the specific societal needs in relation to Nigeria University curriculum intervention?

To answer the above research question, data collected from questionnaire items on suitability of the University curriculum to the societal society need was used in table 1, using descriptive statistic of mean

Table 1

Specific societal needs in relation to Nigeria University curriculum intervention

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X
1	Current University curriculum help in developing social security	42 (18.3%)	20 (8.7%)	112 (48.7%)	56 (24.3%)	2.51
2	Current University help in developing social welfare	43 (18.7%)	22 (9.6%)	111 (48.3%)	54 (23.5%)	2.53
3	Current University curriculum help in developing equality	109 (47.4%)	56 (24.3%)	33 (14.3%)	32 (13.9%)	2.76
4	Current University curriculum help in developing justice	21 (9.1%)	126 (54.8%)	21 (9.1%)	62 (27.0%)	2.26

5	Current University curriculum help in developing equity	45 (19.6%)	38 (16.5%)	127 (55.2%)	20 (8.7%)	2.46
	Overall Mean	2.50				

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 1 indicates the specific societal needs in relation to Nigeria University curriculum intervention. Respondents agreed with some of the stated statement above. It is evidenced from the finding that societal society needs in relation to Nigeria University curriculum intervention are enormous but are specific so by this finding, the specific societal needs as indicated above is that the current University curriculum help in developing equality with the mean score of 2.75 that is greater than the benchmark of 2.5 follow by social security, social welfare, equity and justice with the 2.53, 2.51, 2.46 and 2.26 respectively. The overall mean score of 2.50 justify to a moderate extent that societal society needs are enormous and cannot be overemphasized.

Research Question 2: What are the societal economic needs in relation to Nigeria University curriculum intervention?

To answer the above research question, data collected from questionnaire items on suitability of the University curriculum to the societal society need was used in table 2, using descriptive statistic of mean

Table 2

Societal economic needs in relation to Nigeria University curriculum intervention

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X
1	Current University help in developing employability	106 (46.1%)	21 (9.1%)	40 (17.4%)	63 (27.4%)	2.73
2	Does the current University curriculum help in developing entrepreneurship	57 (24.8%)	22 (9.6%)	33 (14.3%)	118 (51.3%)	2.47
3	Does the current University curriculum help in developing wealth creation	73 (31.7%)	10 (4.3%)	22 (9.6%)	125 (54.3%)	2.43
	Overall Mean	2.52				

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 2 indicates the societal economic need in relation to Nigeria University curriculum intervention. It was revealed from the finding that societal economic needs are developing employability, entrepreneurship and wealth creation with the mean score of 2.73, 2.47 and 2.43 respectively with 2.73 mean representing developing employability as the societal economic need as a major need follow by the entrepreneurship and wealth creation. The overall mean of 2.52 which is above the benchmark of 2.5 justify the fact that societal economic are vary.

Research Question 3: What is the major relevance of Nigeria University curriculum to employment?

To answer the above research question, data collected from questionnaire items on suitability of the University curriculum to graduate employment was used in table 3, using descriptive statistic of mean

Table 3

University curriculum to graduate employment

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X
1	Does the current University curriculum help in developing intellectual skill in student	21 (9.1%)	147 (63.7%)	21 (9.1%)	41 (17.8%)	2.64
2	Does the current University curriculum help in developing moral skill in student	21 (9.1%)	147 (63.7%)	41 (17.8%)	21 (9.1%)	2.73
3	Does the current University curriculum help in developing psychological skill in student	22 (9.6%)	22 (9.6%)	108 (47.0%)	78 (33.9%)	2.44

4	Does the current University curriculum help in developing mental skill in student	20 (8.7%)	40 (17.4%)	60 (26.1%)	110 (47.8%)	2.26
	Overall Mean	2.51				

Table 3 indicates the relevance of Nigeria University curriculum to employability. It is evidenced from the finding that Nigeria University curriculum help in developing intellectual skill in student, moral skill, psychological skill and mental skill but it was revealed that University curriculum in developing moral skill and intellectual skill constituted the major relevance of the curriculum follow by psychological and mental skill which has mean score below the benchmark of 2.5. The overall mean of 2.51 justify the fact that the relevance of Nigeria University curriculum are enormous but vary according to their priorities.

Hypothesis Testing

There is one hypothesis set to guide the study. Pearson product-moment correlation statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between Nigeria University curriculum and graduate employability in Kwara State University, Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson product-moment correlation statistic was used.

Table 4
Pearson product-moment correlation of University curriculum and graduate employability

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Cal r-value	p-value	Decision
University curriculum	230	1.95	90				
				228	.557	.000	Ho Rejected
Graduate Employability	230	1.87	99				

Table 4 shows the calculated r-value of .557 while p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05) for 228 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between University curriculum and graduate employability in Kwara State University, Nigeria is rejected. The finding reveals that there was a moderate significant relationship between University curriculum and graduate employability in Kwara State University, Nigeria. The finding mean if Nigeria University curriculum effectively implemented it will bring about employment among the students and by this have positive impact on the sustainability of the system.

Discussion of Results

This section gives detailed explanation of the findings from the hypotheses tested. It is evidenced from the finding that societal society needs in relation to Nigeria University curriculum intervention are enormous but are specific so by this finding, the specific societal needs as indicated above is that the current University curriculum help in developing equality with the mean score of 2.75 that is greater than the benchmark of 2.5 follow by social security, social welfare, equity and justice with the 2.53, 2.51, 2.46 and 2.26 respectively. The overall mean score of 2.50 justify to a moderate extent that societal society needs are enormous and cannot be overemphasized.The finding however, is similar to that of Adepoju and Olaniyin (1999) who opined that educational restructuring bring a change in the status quo. He went further to say that societal society needs in relation to University curriculum is on social security and developing equality.

It was revealed from the finding that societal economic needs are developing employability, entrepreneurship and wealth creation with the mean score of 2.73, 2.47 and 2.43 respectively with 2.73 mean representing developing employability as the societal economic need as a major need follow by the entrepreneurship and wealth creation.

Sriva

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However, in the research conducted by Adeshina (2005) noted that societal economics needs in relation to University curriculum is mostly in the area of employability.

It is evidenced from the finding that Nigeria University curriculum help in developing intellectual skill in student, moral skill, psychological skill and mental skill but it was revealed that University curriculum in developing moral skill and intellectual skill constituted the major relevance of the curriculum follow by psychological and mental skill which has mean score below the benchmark of 2.5. The overall mean of 2.51 justify the fact that the relevance of Nigeria University curriculum are enormous but vary according to their priorities. This finding confirmed the findings of Obanya (2006) who documented that relevance determines the use which a society would make of educational opportunities. He states further that investment into education is likely to yield a high dividend if the education is relevant to the need of the society.

The finding reveals that there was a moderate significant relationship between University curriculum and graduate employability in Kwara State University, Nigeria. The finding mean if Nigeria University curriculum effectively implemented it will bring about employment among the students and by this have positive impact on the sustainability of the system. This is in line with the view of Clark (2001) who posits that University departments will need to change their curricula every two or three years in order to ensure that the content of their teaching reflects the rapidly advancing frontiers of scientific and information knowledge.

The findings of this study indicated that there was significant relationship between Nigerian university curriculum and graduate employability in Kwara State Universities, Nigeriaas the calculated value was 0.557 and the p.value obtained was 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance for 228 degree of freedom. This study revealed that the current university curriculum helps in developing equality with the mean score of 2.75that is greater than the benchmark of 2.5 followed by social security, social welfare, equity and justice with 2.53, 2.51, 2.46 and 2.26 respectively. This study also revealed that societal economic needs are developing employability, entrepreneurship and wealth creation with the mean scores of 2.73, 2.47 and 2.43 respectively. Thus, developing employability is seen as the major societal economic need followed by entrepreneurship and wealth creation. It was also revealed from this study that university curriculum

helps in developing intellectual and moral skills more than psychological and mental skills as the mean score of psychological and mental skills fall below 2.5.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made among others: university curriculum should be developed in such a way that it will cater for specific societal needs, curriculum planners should endeavor to plan the curriculum so as to cater for psychological and mental wellbeing of all students.

Conclusion

This study investigated restructuring higher education study for graduate employment of universities in Kwara State.It is therefore concluded there is significant relationship between **Nigerian university curriculum and graduate employability in Kwara State Universities hence,** the need to restructure the university curriculum so as to enable students to be employable and to have the acumen of starting their own business upon graduation.

Recommendations

Based on findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- University curriculum should be developed in such a way that it will cater for specific societal needs such as developing justice, equity, social welfare, social security and equality.
- Curriculum planners should endeavour to plan the curriculum so as to cater for psychological and mental wellbeing of all students rather than their intellectual and moral skills alone.
- University curriculum should be re-design in such a way thatstrive to cultivate entrepreneurial skill in the student rather than celebrating outstanding intellectual performance without employable skills.
- Curriculum of universities should be restructured to enable students develop entrepreneurial skills and as such be able to create wealth for themselves.

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