



Managing Higher Education: Implication for Graduate Unemployment in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study focused on managing higher education: implication for graduate unemployment in Rivers state. The study investigated the factors associated with graduate unemployment and the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State. The population of this study was targeted at all the 40,368 higher institutions unemployed graduates registered with the ministry of Economic Empowerment and employment Generation in Rivers State. A simple random sampling was use in the selection of 600 unemployed graduates (400 male and 200 female) in the State. The data for the study was gathered with a questionnaire titled "Graduate Unemployment Questionnaire" (GUQ). It was validated and its reliability co-efficient established at 0.75. It consists of 24 items used to elicit information relevant to the problems investigated. Data was analyzed using means and standard deviation. The response option of Strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A criterion mean of 2.50 was established by dividing the sum of the weights with 4. Responses with a mean of 2.50 and above were accepted (A) while responses below 2.50 were not accepted (NA). The hypotheses posed for the study was tested using the z-test statistics. The findings revealed that no significant difference was found between male and female unemployed graduates on the factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State. Again, no significant difference was established between male and female unemployed graduates on the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State. This paper recommended that students should study discipline which may offer better opportunities for employment in future, higher institutions should be advised on the manpower needs of the country and government should increase on the funding of higher education in the country.

Keywords: Managing, higher, education, graduate, unemployment, Rivers state, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

The global education and economic landscapes have been in a state of rapid transformation. Education to a large degree is accepted as a tool for promoting political, socio-economic and cultural development in Nigeria. The effort of higher education in producing relevant and skilful graduates to meet the needs and aspirations of modern world labour market is a formidable task for education management. The unique position of higher education in making relevant education within the reach of average youth cannot be overemphasized. It is paramount for higher institutions of learning to produce graduates who have the ability to think productively and the skills to meet the requirement of modern labour market. However, success in the graduate labour market is typically defined as graduates securing employment in jobs which make appropriate use of the skills and knowledge developed in the course of their university studies (McClellan, 2006). In Nigeria today, many graduates of higher learning seems to be highly unemployed, some under-employed and a few number of them self - employed.

The growth rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria is becoming very alarming. Akomolafe & Adegun (2009) observes that, the role of higher education in preparing youth for labour market is becoming more challenging in the modern society. Many graduates get jobs that could not sustain them they engage in such jobs just to take care of their daily bread. That is why they receive wages far below the expected wages for those working in standard establishment. Agricultural sector which has been the main stay of Nigeria economy before the discovery and exploitation of crude oil has not been developed enough to provide employment for higher education graduates. Idumange (2004) notes that, a lot of higher education graduates get job outside their disciplines which indicated that their jobs had no relationship with their courses of study. A large number of these graduates also look up to government and private companies for jobs but only a few of them are absorbed.

Ojedele and Ilusanya (2006) also notes that the National Policy on Education specified how higher educational institutions in Nigeria should achieve the goals of developing proper values for the survival of the individual and the inculcation of physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society. Considering the importance of higher education, Ajayi and Ekundayo (2009) submits that the funds allocated to higher education should not merely be considered as an expense but a long-term investment that will be beneficial to society. It is clear, of course, that simply investing more money into the system is not itself an answer; how that money is spent matters greatly in creating a strong and vibrant education sector. The underlining premise of this statement is based on the working relationship with tertiary institutions and their ability to access and sustain available funds for the implementation of viable projects. Oyeagbako (2014) notes that, from 1999-2013, TETFUND has allocated about ₦297 billion to Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education but has only disbursed 55% of the funds. In order to ensure probity, accountability and due process, TETFund has approved guidelines for accessing and utilizing funds meant for higher institution.

The apparent shortage of fund available to higher institutions has been linked to be responsible for the declining posture of instructional facilities in Nigerian higher institutions in recent years. Akinsolu (2012) notes that, these facilities act as stimulants on both the students and teachers. It is because of this reason that school plant planners have continued to emphasize on their proper planning especially before the establishment of any higher institution. This is to ensure that the educational objectives for which a school is established are attained. Every educational resource should be designed to support, stimulate and strengthen teaching and learning. Ajayi and Ekundayo also stressed that the benefits of higher education are reflected on a societal level in terms of lower unemployment rates, better health, lower crime rates, more involvement in societal activities, higher tax returns and security. Despite the immense benefits of higher education to nation building, the potentials of higher education in developing countries to fulfil its responsibility are frequently thwarted by long standing problems bedevilling the system.

Presently, there are doubts whether Nigerian universities under the present conditions can continue to lay claims on being central to national capacity to connect with the new international knowledge system and adopt, adapt and further develop the new technologies needed in the wider society (Verspoor, 2004). The society presently is faced with the challenges of acquiring education that delivers students with the right set of skills and knowledge demanded by the labour market. There is the need for higher education to see new reality of education in modern world. The reality of education today, is that

higher education must turn out students who are employable and are ready to work in flexible organizations that will be constantly changing (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009). The students themselves will continue to learn and grow intellectually throughout their professional lives so that they can adapt and fit the needs of their organizations and grow with them. Higher education needs to produce employable graduates who have the knowledge and skills needed in the modern world. However, for this to be achieved, the educational system must be in close contact with the business community and be willing and able to determine and respond to the needs of that community.

Statement of the problem

It is now a phenomenon to find graduates of various institutions of higher learning roaming the streets in search of jobs many years after graduation. This is contrary to the high expectation of securing gainful employment after acquiring higher education certificates. These dashed high expectations as a result of lack of jobs have culminated into frustration leading to social ills such as political thuggery, youth restiveness, advance fee fraud (419), armed robbery, prostitution, drug abuse and cultism as means of survival. This situation has become worrisome to the government, parents and the society at large. However, if the population of unemployed graduates increases by the day without being addressed, there is bound to be instability in the socio-political system which will eventually lead to insecurity in the country. It is in the light of these that the paper assessed managing education: implication for graduate unemployment in Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to:

- Determine the factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State.
- Determine the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State.

Research Questions

- What are the factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State?
- What are the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference between male and female unemployed graduates on the factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference between male and female unemployed graduates on the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State.

METHODS

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population of this study was targeted at all the 40,368 colleges of education, polytechnic and university unemployed graduates registered with the ministry of Economic Empowerment and employment Generation in Rivers State. A simple random sampling was used in the selection of 600 unemployed graduates (400 male and 200 female) in the State. The data for the study was gathered with a questionnaire titled "Graduate Unemployment Questionnaire" (GUQ). It was validated and its reliability co-efficient established at 0.75. It consists of 24 items used to elicit information relevant to the problems investigated. Data was analyzed using means and standard deviation. The response option of Strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A criterion mean of 2.50 was established by dividing the sum of the weights with 4. Responses with a mean of 2.50 and above were accepted (A) while responses below 2.50 were not accepted (NA). The hypotheses posed for the study was tested using the Z-test statistics.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State?

Table 1: Factors associated with graduate unemployment.

s/n	Variables	Male = 400		Female= 200		Mean set	Remarks
		X1	SD	X2	SD		
1	Increase in number of graduate unemployables.	2.58	0.92	2.90	1.17	2.74	A
2	Lack of job creation investment	2.94	0.81	3.10	0.92	3.02	A
3	Lack of relevant kills for jobs	2.71	0.94	2.86	0.99	2.79	A
4	Poor manpower planning	2.73	0.99	2.88	1.01	2.80	A
5	Over dependence on oil sector	2.94	1.05	2.97	1.05	2.95	A
6	Non-liberalization of the economy	2.82	1.03	2.71	1.05	2.77	A
7	Proliferation of higher education	2.67	0.98	2.69	1.02	2.68	A
8	Low level of technology	2.86	1.12	2.88	0.85	2.87	A
9	Poor economic policies	2.97	1.67	2.87	0.71	2.92	A
10	Rapid population increase	2.71	1.06	2.72	0.80	2.71	A
11	Increase in workers' wages	2.35	0.85	2.33	0.73	2.34	NA
12	Lack of operational law on employment	2.80	1.01	2.77	0.77	2.78	A
13	Lack of interest in Agriculture	3.04	0.83	2.90	0.95	2.97	A
14	Placement of embargo on employment	2.56	0.75	2.58	1.08	2.57	A
15	Job preferences of graduates	2.61	0.85	2.68	1.04	2.64	A
	Aggregate mean	2.75	0.99	2.79	0.95	2.77	A

A = accepted

NA = Not accepted

Results on table 1 shows that items 1- 15 except item 11 all had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean (x) of 2.50 and were agreed on as factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State. However, with an aggregate weighted mean set of 2.77 above the criterion mean of 2.50, it is evident that male and female unemployed graduates agree on factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What are the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State?

Table 2: Coping strategies among the unemployed graduates

s/n	Variables	Male= 400		Female= 200		Mean set	Remarks
		X1	SD	X2	SD		
16	Engaging in hobbies, sports and games.	2.96	1.06	3.09	1.07	3.03	A
17	Engaging in any private income earning jobs	2.97	0.97	3.10	0.93	3.04	A
18	Depending on friends and relations	2.27	0.82	2.46	0.83	2.37	NA
19	Accepting any job available	2.55	1.03	2.58	1.02	2.57	A
20	Go back to school to read further	2.53	0.96	2.79	0.92	2.66	A
21	Staying idle	2.04	0.73	1.99	0.82	2.02	NA
22	Going into apprenticeship	2.78	0.69	3.00	0.96	2.89	A
23	Making efforts to leave the country	2.26	0.83	2.04	0.71	2.15	NA
24	In search of jobs available	2.59	0.66	2.67	0.62	2.63	A
	Aggregate mean	2.55	0.86	2.64	0.88	2.60	

A = accepted

NA = Not accepted

Results on table 2 shows that items 16, 17, 19, 20, 22 and 25 had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean (x) of 2.50 and were agreed on as coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State while item 18, 21 and 24 had a weighted mean scores below the criterion mean (x) of 2.50 and were disagreed on as the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State. However, with an aggregate weighted mean set of 2.60 above the criterion mean of 2.50, it is evident that male and female unemployed graduates agree on the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant difference between male and female unemployed graduates on the factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State.

Table 3: Difference between male and female unemployed graduates on Factors associated with graduate unemployment.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Z- cal.	Z- crit.	df	Level of significance	Decision
Male	400	2.75	0.99	1.10	1.96	598	0.05	Accepted
Female	200	2.79	0.95					

The data on Table 3 shows that the z-calculated value of $1.10 < z\text{-critical of } 1.96$; $p < 0.05$ level of significance with $df=598$. The null hypothesis is accepted. This means, there is no significant difference between male and female unemployed graduates on the factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant difference between male and female unemployed graduates on the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State.

Table 4: Difference between male and female unemployed graduates on the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Z- cal.	Z- crit.	df	Level of significance	Decision
Male	400	2.55	0.86	1.35	1.96	598	0.05	Accepted
Female	200	2.64	0.88					

The data on Table 4 shows that the z-calculated value of $1.35 < z\text{-critical of } 1.96$; $p < 0.05$ level of significance with $df = 598$. The null hypothesis is accepted. This means, there is no significant difference between male and female unemployed graduates on the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female unemployed graduates on the factors associated with graduate unemployment in Rivers State. It further revealed that increase in number of graduate unemployables, lack of job creation investment, lack of relevant skills for jobs, poor manpower planning, over dependence on oil sector, non-liberalization of the economy, non-liberalization of the economy, proliferation of higher education, low level of technology, poor economic policies, rapid population increase, lack of operational law on employment, lack of interest in Agriculture, placement of embargo on employment and job preferences of graduates all have a criterion mean above 2.50. However, with an aggregate weighted mean set of 2.77 above the criterion mean of 2.50, it indicates that these factors are responsible for the inherent graduate unemployment in Rivers State.

The position of higher education in making education relevant and within the reach of average youth is a welcomed development. Higher education graduates unemployment is growing at an alarming rate in Nigeria. Our society today is facing the challenges of acquiring education that gives students the right set of skills and knowledge demanded by the labour market. Akomolafe and Adegun (2009) reiterates that, higher education has an important role to play towards the empowerment of the youths for labour market. There is the need for higher education to see new reality of education in modern world. The reality of education today, is that higher education must turn out students who are ready to fill available jobs in the market place, who are ready to work in flexible organizations that will be constantly changing. Many graduates had engaged in jobs that could not sustain them which only take care of their daily bread. That is why they receive wages far below the expected wages for those working in standard establishment. Ojedele and Ilusanya (2006) also posited that the National Policy on Education specified how higher educational institutions in Nigeria should pursue the goals of developing proper values for the survival of the individual and the inculcation of physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.

The study also revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female unemployed graduates on the coping strategies among the unemployed graduates in Rivers State. It further revealed that engaging in hobbies, sports and games, engaging in any private income earning jobs, accepting any job available, go back to school to read further, going into apprenticeship and going in search of jobs available, all have criterion mean above 2.50. However, with an aggregate weighted mean set of 2.60 above the criterion mean of 2.50, it indicates that the above strategies help the unemployed graduates to cope with the inherent unemployment situation in Rivers State.

Many graduates of higher education in the country today seems to be highly unemployed, some under-employed and a few number of them self - employed. McClellan (2006) reiterates that, success in the graduate labour market is typically defined as graduates securing employment in jobs which make appropriate use of the skills and knowledge developed in the course of their university studies. Idumange (2004) notes that, a great number of higher education graduates get job outside their disciplines which indicated that their jobs had no relationship with their courses of study. A large number of these graduates also look up to government and private companies for jobs but only a few of them are absorbed. The Agricultural sector which is a vast area for job creation has not been developed enough to provide employment for higher education graduates. Agriculture which has been the main stay of Nigeria economy before the discovery and exploitation of crude oil has not received the due attention to provide job for the youth.

CONCLUSION

Our society today is faced with the challenges of acquiring higher education that gives students the right set of skills and knowledge deemed fit for competition in the labour market. It is desirable of higher education to produce graduates who have ability to think critically and have personal, social and communication skills to meet the requirement of modern labour market. Employable and unemployable graduates are increasingly roaming the streets in search of job which are limited or nearly unavailable. It is important for all stakeholders to plan, strategise and create employment opportunities so as to reduce the alarming rate of increase in graduate unemployment which could lead to uncontrollable youth restiveness in the country in the near future.

Recommendations

- Students should study discipline which may offer better opportunities for employment in future;
- The higher institutions should be advised on the manpower needs of the country;
- Private individuals should be encouraged to float industries in the state to absorb unemployed graduates;
- The government should lift embargo on employment on all sectors; and
- Government should increase on the funding of higher education in the country.

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