

# CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND THE EMPLOYABILITY OF EDUCATION GRADUATES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

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## ABSTRACT

This paper sought to examine the relationship that exists between effective curriculum implementation and the employability rate of Education Graduates, with a case study of undergraduate education students in the University of Port Harcourt. To establish this, 2 objectives and research questions as well as 1 hypothesis were formulated to aid this. To further digress on this relationship between the variables, 3 concepts and 1 theory were also reviewed for this purpose. Descriptive survey design was adopted for this while a sample of 369 out of 4,771 undergraduate education students in all the Departments of the Faculty of Education was selected for this study. A self-constructed questionnaire was employed for data collection and the data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and Chi-squared statistical analysis. It was found out that effective curriculum implementation does help to determine the employability level of education graduates but that does not seem to be of much existence in most tertiary institutions. It was then concluded that there is less effectiveness of curriculum implementation in most educational institutions brings about an outcome of half-baked graduates into the economy, thereby making them to either be redundant or unemployed. It was then recommended that curriculum planners should review the curriculum well to include relevant impartation of skills and develop strategies towards the effective implementation of the curriculum. It was also recommended that educators should also contribute their quota towards the effective implementation process of the reviewed curriculum.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Curriculum Implementation, and Employability.

## INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions, most especially higher education institutions, need to recognise the essence for students to be duly equipped with relevant knowledge that ensures their rightful development towards employment in the society, thereby making them to be fully aware that there is a life after school which solely is dependent on what each and every individual can bring to the table towards the improvement of the economy. With this in mind, there will be essential need to inculcate in these students' things that are to be termed as relevant towards this regards, thereby bringing about careful selection of the kind of knowledge that is to be passed on. This knowledge to be passed on is then said to be contained in the curriculum of these institutions, thereby emphasizing the relevance of the curriculum as well as its implementation process towards the creation of employable graduates into the society. Employers, universities and professional bodies agree that Nigeria needs to develop professionals who are highly skilled and ready to face challenges of increased competition. This is so because currently speaking, we need professional who are responsive to economic,

social, cultural, technical, and environmental changes and can work flexibly and intelligently across business context.

Curriculum is an important factor to be considered when dealing with the educational sector as well as the effectiveness of the various institutions slated to be under it. This is the reason why curriculum planners have continuously endeavoured to seek out means by which it can be better improved in each of these institutions to suit the respective strata for which they belong. This is because there is an iota of variability in the kind of curriculum these educational institutions lay focus on based on the strata for which they fall in. This variability also tends to affect the way and manner by which the curriculum is being implemented and this implementation process is one of the determining factors towards determining the effectiveness of the curriculum established or planned for a particular educational institution. This is so in essence that it helps to weigh the rate at which set educational objectives can be achieved, in relation to the learning outcome of students, since they are at the receiving end of the curriculum and its instructional process as well as the major focus point of the society when it comes to them being able to contribute their quota on the development of the economy. It is this essence that tends to determine the rate at which these students, including university graduates, are capable of being qualified as being employable by organizations present in the society, without regards for the sector for which they fall under. National development is inextricably linked to human development, all education graduates of institutions of higher learning play a major role in the development of their countries and in the advancement of their respective disciplines.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many education graduates of various Nigerian universities are unable to find work while some that are employed are being retrenched from their work and this issue can be basically traced to several impending factors, of which one of them is the employability rate of these graduates in question, with regards to their competency towards handling whatsoever task that is being thrown at them as well as the possessing of relevant skills or knowledge that is being sought after by these organizations in the society. When one seems to be knowledgeable with the right information, he/she should not have difficulty in seeking and obtaining work, rather it would be work that will be seeking the so-called individual. The implementation of relevant curriculum brings about the emergence of employable graduates that the economy of Nigeria is currently seeking for but sadly, that does not seem to be effective in most higher education institutions in the country, thereby leaving the nation with half-baked graduates that can only but contribute minimally to national development. Standards have fallen in higher education due to years of poor implementation of the curriculum leading to a growing preference for overseas university education.

### **Aim and Objectives**

To further digress on curriculum implementation in higher education institutions and the employability rate of education graduates in University of Port Harcourt, the following objectives were slated for this study:

1. Determine the influence of the rate of effectiveness of curriculum implementation on the competency of education students in the University of Port Harcourt.
2. Ascertain the effect of effective curriculum implementation in higher education institutions on the employability rate of education graduates.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

1. What is the influence of the rate of effectiveness of curriculum implementation on the competency of education students in the University of Port Harcourt?
2. What is the effect of effective curriculum implementation in higher education institutions on the employability rate of education graduates?

### **Hypothesis**

The following hypotheses were designed for this study:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no relationship between effective curriculum implementation in higher educational institutions and the employability rate of education graduates

### **Literature Review**

Some literatures are to be reviewed to further expand knowledge in the relationship that exists between curriculum implementation and employability of education students.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory on Curriculum Implementation**

This theory was propounded by Howard Gardner, who is a psychologist in Harvard University, in the year 1983. In his theory, he suggested that human beings possess multiple intelligences. Gardner's early work in psychology and later in human cognition and human potential led to the development of the initial six intelligences. Today there are nine intelligences and the possibility of others may eventually expand the list, with which he made details of seven of these: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, inter-personal, and intra-personal. These intelligences (or competencies) relate to a person's unique aptitude set of capabilities and ways they might prefer to demonstrate intellectual abilities.

Human potential can be tied to one's preferences to learning; thus, Gardner's focus on human potential lies in the fact that people have a unique blend of capabilities and skills (intelligences). This model can be used to understand "overall personality, preferences and strengths". Gardner asserts that people who have an affinity toward one of the intelligences do so in concert with the other intelligences as "they develop skills and solve problems" (businessballs.com, 2009).

#### **Implication of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory to the Study**

Gardner's multiple intelligences theory can be used for curriculum development, planning instruction, selection of course activities, and related assessment strategies. Instruction which is designed to help students develop their strengths can also trigger their confidence to develop areas in which they are not as strong. Students' multiple learning preferences can be addressed when instruction includes a range of meaningful and appropriate methods, activities, and assessments. His theory has great implications to education since the developmental milestones of each intelligence vary with individual and every child has his or her unique intellectual profile. He therefore sees curriculum implementation as a good way to nurture children's multiple intelligences through integrated and daily life learning activities. In addition to this, he also stated that children can also figure out their own ways to develop different intelligences.

### **Curriculum Implementation**

How one defines curriculum depends on how one implements, differentiates, and assesses curriculum. For some educators, curriculum is simply all planned occurrences in the classroom (Wiles & Bondi, 2007). For others, curriculum is narrowly defined as the content they teach every day. Still others view curriculum in a manner that is more refined than all classroom occurrences and broader than content. However curriculum is defined, it has three important components: (1) the intended outcomes, (2) what is taught, and (3) the manner of

implementation. Eisner (2002) suggested that curriculum pertains to instruction that is planned with associated intended outcomes, recognizing that much more may occur in the classroom that is meaningful and relevant, even though it may be unintended.

Hosp, Hosp, and Howell (2007) viewed curriculum as the course or path embarked on, reflecting what is taught in the classroom. Hoover and Patton (2005) stated that curriculum must also consider the setting, strategies, and management in the context of the content and skills being taught.

Working from this definition, elements related to both the “what” and the “how” of curriculum implementation and assessment are emphasized. These interrelated aspects are important; Hoover and Patton (2005) wrote that “how one defines this term (curriculum) relates directly to how one approaches it (curriculum implementation)”. Educators must be aware of how they define or view curriculum because their perspectives are directly connected to how they implement, differentiate, and assess curriculum effectiveness. The awareness of the distinguishing characteristics that exist between curriculum and its implementation will enable these educators to select and know the contents that will be of relevance to the students in the care as well as the right approaches to employ in the delivery of these contents, thereby making them to be more efficient the their job.

The curriculum must be implemented with fidelity, contain reasonable and needed differentiations, and include on-going monitoring of student progress. In implementing any curriculum, teachers must make daily decisions about implementation based on students’ needs (e.g., the need to restate instructions, provide additional practice to learn content, or reinforce a concept in a culturally relevant way). This is to say that curriculum is essential for the all-round development of an individual and therefore should be carefully and effectively implemented as it will get to determine the productivity rate of the said individual.

### **Employability**

Employability refers to your ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment, and obtain new employment if required. In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful (Pool,& Sewell, 2007). It is taken to be a more complex construct than those core or key skill. Employability and good learning are seen as being closely aligned and not oppositional constructs. An individual’s employability is dependent on his/her:

- ✓ Knowledge (what he/she knows)
- ✓ Skills (what he/she does with what he/she knows)
- ✓ Attitudes (how he/she approaches things)

The way one use ones’ knowledge and skills and present them to employers, and the context (e.g. personal circumstances) and work sector within which one seeks work. Employers want graduates with relevant subject skills, knowledge and understanding, but in addition to this are looking for well-rounded individuals who have a set of personal and general life skills that equip them to adapt well , learn new and specific skills of the job and participate and contribute in a valuable way in their organisation.

One is constantly developing useful and marketable skills through managing college work, assignments and projects, part time jobs, involvement in sports, Interests and extracurricular activities. There are some basic skills that make one employable;

- **Personal Development**

All employers will want to know that one is committed to one's self-development. There are many ways to demonstrate this. It might be that one has overcome a difficult obstacle or one could have gone out of one's way to learn a new skill. What is important is that one has pushed oneself.

- **Communication**

Employers look for people who know how to get their point across clearly, articulately and professionally. Just as importantly, one should be a good listener – one will take other people's opinions on board and actively seek out feedback. One will also be comfortable in talking to groups.

- **Creativity and Innovation**

Successful organisations are fuelled by good ideas. Employers will want to know that one can come up with interesting suggestions and that one is always looking for better ways of doing things. Good ideas come in all sorts of shapes and sizes – and the best ideas aren't necessarily the biggest

- **Teamwork**

The ability to get along with others and to lead a team to success is vital to any organisation. This means that one needs to be able to demonstrate that one is a natural team player and that one can adapt one's style to accommodate others if one needs to.

- **Professionalism**

Employers will expect one to be committed to delivering the best standards, adopting the right procedures and maintaining the highest levels of confidentiality. This means staying motivated and for all talks and upholding complete professionalism, even in conflicts or difficult conversations.

- **Organisational skills**

In most jobs, one will be expected to take responsibility for your own workload. Employers will want to know how one manages one's course work and use one's initiative to deal with the unexpected.

- **Flexibility**

As an employee, it is vital that one keep pace with a constantly evolving workplace. One will need to show that one responds to change positively and can adapt quickly while still working productively to a high standard.

- **Commercial awareness**

Whatever sector one wants to work in, it's important that one understands how it operates and the different issues that affect it. Look also at the skills sought by employers in one's sector and think about how one will show that one can apply them to add value to their organisation.

- **Problem solving/analysing**

In the world of work, things don't always go according to plan. That is why employers need to know that one can analyse information, identify any potential issues and come up with effective solutions.

- **Initiative**

In any job, one needs to be able to take the initiative. Although it's important that one follows the right rules and regulations, one should also be confident when it comes to suggesting new or different ways of doing things, or anticipating problems or issues before they arise.

- **Ability to use new technologies**

Technology is involved in almost every job. It is the 21st century way of doing and working: whether this involves keeping records of information, communicating with others, maintaining

accounts or understanding a manufacturing system. Almost every job involves using technology some sort. It is vital to be comfortable with it.

### **Curriculum Implementation and Employability of Education Graduates**

Year in, year out, tertiary institutions made up of Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education, about 322 in all excluding Technical Colleges (Educational and Employability Survey Report – March 2014) had been churning out graduates that have continued, to clog up the labour-market, thereby, increasing the growth rate of unemployed youths in the nation. According to a recent survey report on the Effect of the quality of tertiary education on employability of fresh graduates, carried out by Philips Consulting in March 2014, the current education system does not appear to be producing graduates with generic and essential skills, hence the continuous increase in the rate of youth unemployment.

Oyesiku(2010) in a paper, giving the synopsis to a workshop, organized by Ogun State Bureau of Tertiary Institutions in 2010 revealed that available statistics shows that the nation's job creation capacity is growing at an annual rate of between 5% and 7% over the last seven years. Meanwhile, about 213 Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in the country then produced over 300,000 graduates annually; a number that should ordinary meet the country's human capital resources needs, but employers willing to pay well to attract skilled workers are increasingly, finding it difficult to fill job vacancies.

Oguntuase (2013) opines in an article: Unemployability of Nigeria Graduates: Myth or Reality? These products of the Nigerian University system have at different forum been challenged to test their suitability or otherwise to secure few available white collar jobs. He went further to say that the situation is not only sympathetic but embarrassing that the vast human material resources available to the country had not been trained and utilized to the advantage of the country.

Oyesiku (2010) went on further to say that tertiary institutions are being reproached for declining quality of educational outputs due to deterioration in teaching and physical facilities, inadequate funding, quality of inputs into the institutions, government and private sectors' lack of support and the curricular for teaching the students. He is of the opinion that there is a sharp decline in required skilled graduates available to the labour market, that is, there is a gap between the demand for and the supply of graduates into the market. Graduate employability is usually placed within the context of a knowledge economy and in the context of a locally, nationally and globally competitive labour market environment.

Employers of labour are getting worried over the competency of the graduates that do apply for very limited job vacancies. They often complain that some of these graduates though professionally or technically qualified are unemployable, in that they lack the requisite, essential skills or competencies needed in the job or for sustainable employment. These skills create a gap in their knowledge which must be filled to make them suitable to compete for few, existing vacancies that crop up from time to time. They want the graduate recruits to be professionally competent in their chosen fields. They also want them to be equipped with complementary life skills such as problem solving, reflective and critical thinking interpersonal and teaming skills, effective communication character, integrity, self-esteem, self-discipline, organizing skills, leadership skills and the ability to translate ideas into action. The problem is that these skills are rarely taught in schools and these are the gaps that are missing in a graduate's ability to be gainfully employed even when the jobs are there. Sodipo (2010) affirmed this in a survey carried out on the level of competency of tertiary education graduate

employed in the Ogun State Civil Service between 2004 and 2006. For education graduates to be successful in their chosen teaching careers, there should be a clear picture from their first year till graduation, how and ways to achieve employability in their chosen disciplines, observation, volunteer work and internship should be encouraged from the first year and at various stages of the curriculum.

### Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey design to investigate the significance of effective curriculum implementation on the employability of education graduates in University of Port Harcourt. The population of the study consists of all 4,773 undergraduate education students present in all the Departments in the Faculty of Education. A sample of 369 undergraduate education students was selected from the population with the aid of a sampling technique known as Taro Yamane's Sampling Technique. The instrument employed for data collection was a self-designed scale of measurement of relationship between effective curriculum implementation and employability of education graduates. The scale was titled Effective Curriculum Implementation and Employability of Education Graduates Scale (ECIEEGS), whose validity was determined by experts and reliability through Cronbach Alpha statistics with reliability index of 0.72. All research questions were answered with Mean and Standard Deviation statistical analysis while the hypotheses were tested for with the aid of Chi-squared at 0.05 level of significance.

### Results:

**Research Question 1:** What is the influence of the rate of effectiveness of curriculum implementation on the competency of education students in the University of Port Harcourt?

**Table 1:** Students Responses on Effective Curriculum Implementation and their Competency Level

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Remark
1	With a good curriculum and its implementation, my knowledge-base is increased	105	201	36	27	3.04	0.82	Accepted
2	With a good curriculum and its implementation, my confidence level on my courses is increased	144	186	24	15	3.24	0.75	Accepted
3	With a good curriculum and its implementation, my grades can be improved on rapidly	141	219	6	3	3.35	0.56	Accepted
4	With a good curriculum and its implementation, my motivation to learn more is increased	126	207	27	9	3.12	0.69	Accepted

Table 1 above show students' responses on how effective curriculum influences their competency level. From the analysis done in the table, it can be seen that all the items with mean scores of 3.04, 3.24, 3.35, and 3.12 respectively were accepted because their mean scores are above the criterion-mean score of 2.5. From this result, it can be deduced effective implementation of the right curriculum in the institution has a high amount of influence on the competency level of these students in numerous ramifications. The items have standard deviation scores of 0.82, 0.75, 0.56, and 0.69 respectively.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between effective curriculum implementation in higher education institutions and the employability rate of education graduates?

**Table 2:** Students Ratings on Effective Curriculum Implementation and effective curriculum implementation in higher education institutions and the employability rate of education graduates

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Remark
1	Due to right curriculum and its implementation, I can confidently pass on knowledge to others.	123	204	27	15	3.18	0.73	Accepted
2	Due to right curriculum and its implementation, I can effectively contribute my quota in any organization I find myself	135	216	12	6	3.3	0.61	Accepted
3	Due to right curriculum and its implementation, I can effectively cooperate with others and work hand-in-hand with them	114	159	63	33	2.96	0.91	Accepted
4	Due to right curriculum and its implementation, I can take on new tasks with much efficiency towards executing them.	117	192	45	15	3.11	0.77	Accepted

Table 2 above shows students' responses on how effective curriculum implementation affects their employability level. From the analysis done in the table, it can be seen that all the items with mean scores of 3.18, 3.3, 2.96, and 3.11 respectively were accepted because their mean scores are above the criterion-mean score of 2.5. From this result, it can be deduced effective implementation of the right curriculum in the institution has a high amount of influence on the employability rate of these students in the future in numerous ramifications. The items have standard deviation scores of 0.73, 0.61, 0.91, and 0.77 respectively.

**Hypothesis Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no relationship between effective curriculum implementation in higher education institutions and the employability rate of education graduates

**Table 3:** Chi-square statistical analysis showing the correlational statistics between effective curriculum implementation in higher education institutions and the employability rate of education graduates

Variables	n	Df	X <sup>2</sup> -cal	X <sup>2</sup> -tab	Remark
Curriculum Implementation Vs Employability of Education Graduates	369	9	73.6517	16.919	Reject Ho <sub>1</sub>

Table 3 shows the result of the correlational relationship between effective curriculum implementation in higher education institutions and the employability rate of education graduates. From the hypothesis testing done through Chi-square, it can be seen that X<sup>2</sup>-cal. is greater than X<sup>2</sup>-tab, thereby implying that the null hypothesis will be rejected. This therefore shows that there is a significant relationship between effective curriculum implementation in higher education institutions and the employability rate of education graduates.

## Discussion of Findings

### Effective Curriculum Implementation and Students Competency

Curriculum serves as a prominent component of education system and this can be accrued to the belief that it has the tendency of shaping the lives of those at the receiving end (i.e. the students) of it and this goes in several angles. When the curriculum of a school is neither well-planned nor implemented, there is bound to be a catastrophic effect of it on how the students of that school will turn out to be in future. One of the areas that right curriculum implementation



is in the competency level of these students. From the analysis done in table 1, it was clearly accepted that effective curriculum implementation do have a high significant effect on the competency level of students. This assertion was promptly supported by Eisner (2002) who affirmed that curriculum is planned with associated intended outcomes that is meaningful and relevant, even though it may be unintended. The implication of this is that curriculum of educational institutions need be carefully reviewed so as to bring about the better preparedness of students for what lies ahead outside the four-walls of the school premises.

### **Effective Curriculum Implementation and Employability of Education Graduates**

As purposely discussed above with regards to effective curriculum implementation having a significant role to play towards equipping students with the necessary potentials needed for them to overcome the challenges that lies ahead, same can as well be said to determine the rate at which these students can be duly termed as employable by several organizations in the society. This is so because curriculum is meant to imbibe into these students the necessary basic skills that are required for these students to be able to find their way in life after leaving the four walls of the school premises as graduates. From the analysis done in table 2, it was duly accepted also that effective curriculum implementation do have a high significant effect on the employability rate of education graduates, but that is yet to be noticed in our economy. This assertion was duly supported by Oguntuase (2013) who is of the opinion that the vast human material resources available to the country had not been trained and utilized to the advantage of the country.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion as to what has been promptly investigated in this study, it can be duly said that there is less effectiveness in the rate at which curriculum is being planned and implemented in most educational institutions thereby bring about a resultant outcome of half-baked individuals that are less competent towards contributing their quota onto the development of the economy, thereby making them to either be redundant or unemployed.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings gotten so far from this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Curriculum planners should review the curriculum well to include relevant impartation of skills in every educational institution.
2. Curriculum planners should also develop new and enabling implementation strategies towards the effective implementation of the reviewed curriculum.
3. The Government should provide means by which the reviewed curriculum can be adequately fused with the developed strategies meant for it.
4. Educators should also contribute their quota towards the effective implementation process of the reviewed curriculum.

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