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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CORPORATE IMAGE AND EMPLOYABILITY OF POLYTECHNIC GRADUATES IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between corporate image and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State. The population of the study consisted of 699 owners of private organizations and 503 Directors of Administration in the Ministries in Kwara State. The sample of the study was 306 respondents, out of the total 1202. The sample was selected using proportional sampling technique with the aid of Research Advisor (2006) sample determination table. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Educational Management, University of Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was ensured using Crumbach Alpha and the reliability value was 0.64. Percentage was used to answer the research questions while Pearson moment correlation statistic was used to test the hypotheses formulated. The findings of the study include; the image of polytechnics in Kwara state is fairly good (34.97%); polytechnic graduates in Kwara State are lowly employable (68.30%); there is relationship between academic integrity and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State ($r = 0.67$; $P < 0.05$); there is relationship between students' conduct and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State ($r = 0.78$; $P < 0.05$); there is relationship between admission process and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state ($r = 0.63$; $P < 0.05$); there is relationship between quality of graduates and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state; ($r = 0.77$; $P < 0.05$). It was therefore recommended that: strict disciplinary measures should be put in place to improve academic integrity and admission process should be improved upon by putting functional mechanisms in place.

Keywords: Corporate Image, Employability, Polytechnic Graduates

Introduction

Rising incidence of unemployment results in loss of income for individuals, reduces revenue for governments, hinders economic growth and increases pressure on government. Employers of labour 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 (Akanmu, 2011).

According to a survey report on the effect of the quality of tertiary education on employability of fresh graduates, published by International Labour Organization, (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. It was further stated in the report that 24 million jobs are needed over the next ten years to reduce the current unemployment level by half. Even with that, large number of graduates have continuously been found incapable of meeting up with the employment requirements of the work force and have thus been unsuccessful in either securing or keeping a job. This is a challenge for employers in filling their graduate vacancies; even with high level of youth unemployment in the country. It therefore means that there is skill gap between what the graduates possess and the skills required by the employers of labour (Gray, 2016).

Skill-gap or performance gap may be seen as the difference between employability skills and present performance of the individual, that is, the skills that the individual lacks which are inhibiting his performance or which may make him unsuitable for a gainful employment. It is the required performance minus the present performance. According to Sodipo (2014) to be found employable, the individual must possess in addition to qualifications or specialist experience, capabilities or competencies such as aptitude (talent) attitude and behaviour. The individual (employee) must be aware of what the employers are looking for in any employee. The person must be able to show that he is employable, a team member and a contributing member of the organization.

Many employers of labour believed that graduates of nowadays are half-baked and lacks the required attitude to be employed. Hence they are not employable mainly because of the perceived lack of competency of the graduates. As envisage by Ayotte (2001), an employer may be willing to employ a graduate of an institution with high academic integrity, good students' conduct, ideal admission process and high quality of graduates. This may not be the same with students of an institution with low academic integrity, bad students' conduct, bad admission process and low quality of graduates, Thus corporate image play important role in the success of both the graduate of an institution, as well as that of the organization as a whole (Ayotte, 2001).

Corporate image is the net result of the interaction of all the experiences, beliefs, feelings, knowledge and impressions, that people have about a company. (Bernstein 2014). Corporate image, or reputation, describes the manner in which a company, its activities, and its products or services are perceived by outsiders. Polytechnics like many other Organizations interact with the public in many ways. The public may be viewed as past, present or potential customers or clients. These public or clients view the organization especially academic organizations like polytechnics in terms its academic integrity, students' conduct, admission process and quality of graduates. The employers of labour are part of this populace. The way the employers of labour and other people picture the polytechnics in terms of their academic integrity, students' conduct, admission process and quality of graduate may make or mar their willingness to employ the products of these polytechnics. It is against this background that this study investigates the relationship between corporate image and employment of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

According to National Bureau of Statistics (2013), In Nigeria, unemployment rate in 2010 was 21% which rose to 23.9% in 2011. The report further reveals that 54 % of Nigerian Youths were unemployed in 2012 out of a total population of 64 million comprising youths aged between 15 and 35 years. In the same vein, Akanmu (2011) stressed that that three out of ten graduates of polytechnics in Kwara State are unemployed. Some are forced to accept marginal jobs (not related to their qualifications) in sales, agriculture and manual labour. For those who are lucky to find jobs, employers are concerned about their skills and suitability with their job requirements. This alarming situation may not be unconnected to the high incidence of crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, cultism, terrorism (Boko-Haram menace), prostitution, drug peddling and other social vices, being exhibited brazenly in Kwara State and the country at large.

Oyesiku (2010) went further to say that tertiary institutions are being reproached for declining quality of educational outputs due to inadequate funding, poor quality of inputs into the institutions, poor students' conduct arising from cultism, corruption, government and private sectors' lack of support and the curricular for teaching the students. The general opinion is 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. There is the need to identify the skills that the graduates need to close the gap between unemployment and the 'unemployables'.



This general opinion (which may be right or wrong) may be connected to the perceived image of the polytechnics by the employers of labour. Many employers prefer to employ graduates of universities instead of polytechnic graduates probably because of the perceived image of polytechnics by the public, which is corporate image

As part of recommendations of by Clark (2001) and Schomburg (2007), high unemployment in relation to employability of graduates of the institutions of higher learning, especially the polytechnics call for quantitative and empirical assessment to determine solution to the problem. Thus, this study was carried out to fill part of this gap.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between corporate image and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state. Specifically the purpose include: to

- i. examine the corporate image of polytechnics in Kwara state;
- ii. investigate how employable are the graduates of polytechnic in Kwara state;
- iii. examine the relationship between academic integrity and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state;
- iv. investigate the relationship between students' conduct and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state;
- v. investigate the relationship between admission process and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state; and
- vi. determine the relationship between quality of graduates and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study

- i. What is nature of the corporate image of polytechnics in Kwara state?
- ii. How employable are the graduates of polytechnic in Kwara state?

Research Hypotheses

One main hypothesis and four operational hypotheses were formulated to sharpen the focus of this study.

Main Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between corporate image and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state.

Operational Hypotheses

- i. There is no relationship between academic integrity and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.
- ii. There is no relationship between students' conduct and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.
- iii. There is no relationship between admission process and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.
- iv. There is no relationship between quality of graduates and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.

Research Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design of correlation type. The population of this study consists of 1202 owners of private organizations and Directors of Administration in the Ministries in Kwara State (211 from Kwara North, 602 from Kwara Central and 389 from Kwara South). The sample of the study was 306 respondents, where 153 respondents were selected out of 602 respondents from Kwara Central, 99 Kwara North senatorial district. The sample was selected using proportional sampling technique with the aid of Research Advisor (2006) sample determination table.

A researcher- designed questionnaire was used to collect relevant information from the respondents. The questionnaire has two sections. Section A consists 20 items designed to elicit information on corporate image, section B on the other hand consists nine items systematically designed to elicit information about employability of graduates in Kwara State. Section A was designed with the response pattern of Very Good (VG), Good (G), Fairly Good (FG) and Not Good (NG). The section B followed a 4 likert scale format, where SA= strongly agree, A= agree, D= strongly disagree and SD= strongly disagree.

The validity of the instrument was ensured by given draft copies of the questionnaire to three experts in the department of educational management, University of Ilorin. Corrections and modifications were made by the experts and effected by the researcher. Thus the face and content validity of the instrument were ensured before proposing to go to the field for its administration. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument and the value of 0.64 was derived. It was therefore adjudged that the instrument is reliable. Percentage was used to answer the research questions while Pearson moment correlation statistic was used to test the hypotheses formulated.

Answering Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the nature of the corporate image of polytechnics in Kwara state?

Table 1: Nature of Corporate Image of Polytechnics in Kwara State , Nigeria

S/N	Item	VG F(%)	G F(%)	FG F(%)	NG F(%)
1.	Academic Integrity	60(19.61)	90(29.41)	112(36.60)	44(14.38)
2.	Students' Conduct	23(7.52)	31(10.13)	102(33.33)	150(49.02)
3.	Admission Process	31(10.13)	102(33.33)	112(36.60)	61(19.93)
4	Quality of Graduate	57(18.63)	82(26.80)	102(33.33)	65(21.24)
	Percentage Average	13.98	24.92	34.97	26.13

Table one revealed that 13.98 percent of the respondents (on the average) were of the opinion that corporate image of polytechnics in Kwara state is very good, 24.92 percent were of the opinion that corporate image of polytechnics in Kwara state is good, 34.87 percent were of the opinion that corporate image of polytechnics in Kwara state is fairly good while 26.13 percent were of the opinion that corporate image of polytechnics in Kwara state is not good. Since the highest percentage of the respondents were of the opinion that corporate image of polytechnics in Kwara State is fair, it is suffix to conclude that corporate image of polytechnics in Kwara State is fairly good.

Research Question Two: How employable are the graduates of polytechnics in Kwara State?



Table 2: Employability of Graduates in Polytechnics in Kwara State

S/N	Items	Positive Response		Negative Response	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	I can employ polytechnic graduates	45	14.71	558	85.29
2	I can employ them to do petty jobs	153	50.00	153	50.00
3	They won't cause chaos if employed, so I can	88	28.76	218	71.24
4	Many are competent, so I will	100	32.68	206	61.32
5	Majority of them are not cultist, so I can employ polytechnic graduates	88	28.76	218	71.24
6	They are likely to motivate others to cooperate with the management, so I can employ them	32	10.46	274	89.54
7	I will rather employ them than university graduates	64	20.92	242	79.08
8	Polytechnic graduates are trained in a less hostile environment, thus I can employ them	150	49.02	156	50.98
9	Polytechnic graduates are good technically, I will willingly employ them	153	50.00	153	50.00
Percentage Average(%)			31.70		68.30

Table two shows that 31.70% of the respondents (on the average) positively responded that they can employ polytechnic graduates, employ them to do petty jobs, that they can employ them because they won't cause chaos, because they're competent, because they are likely to motivate others to cooperate with the management, because majority of them are not cultist, because they are trained in less hostile environment and because they are good technically. However, 68.30% of the respondents (on the average) negatively responded. Since the number of respondents that were in agreement is lower than those that disagreed, it can therefore be concluded that polytechnic graduates are lowly employable. This is based on the benchmark that 70-100 is excellently employable, 60-69 is highly employable, 50-59 is averagely employable, 20-49 is lowly employable while 0-19 is considered not employable.

Main Hypotheses

Ho: There is no relationship between corporate image and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.

Table 3: Corporate Image & Employability of Polytechnic Graduates in Kwara State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R-Value Calculated	P-Value	Remark
Corporate Image	306	21.14	1.69	0.67	0.002	Ho Rejected
Employability Of Poly. Graduates	306	20.07	1.41			

P<0.05 at 0.05 alpha level

It can be deduced from table three that the p value of 0.002 is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between corporate image and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State is rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between corporate image and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.

Operational Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between academic integrity and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State

Table 4: Academic Integrity & Employability of Polytechnic Graduates in Kwara State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R-Value Calculated	P-Value	Remark
Academic Integrity	306	25.05	1.93	0.54	0.000	Ho ₁ Rejected
Employability Of Poly. Graduates	306	20.07	1.41			

P<0.05 at 0.05 alpha level

It can be deduced from table four that the p value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between academic integrity and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State is rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between academic integrity and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between students' conduct and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State

Table 5: Students' Conduct & Employability of Polytechnic Graduates in Kwara State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R-Value Calculated	P-Value	Remark
Students' Conduct	306	26.21	1.95	0.88	0.001	Ho ₂ Rejected
Employability Of Poly. Graduate	306	20.07	1.41			

P<0.05 at 0.05 alpha level

It can be deduced from table five that the p value of 0.001 is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between students' conduct and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State is rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between students' conduct and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between admission process and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.

Table 6: Admission Process & Employability of Polytechnic Graduates in Kwara State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R-Value Calculated	P- Value	Remark
Admission Process	306	24.99	2.11	0.63	0.000	Ho ₃ Rejected
Employability of Polytechnic Graduates	306	20.07	1.41			

P<0.05 at 0.05 alpha level

It can be deduced from table seven that the p value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between admission process and

employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State is rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between admission process and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between quality of graduates and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State.

Table 7: Quality of Graduates & Employability of Polytechnic Graduates in Kwara State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R-Value Calculated	P-Value	Remark
Quality of Graduates	306	27.66	1.89	0.77	0.001	Ho ₄ Rejected
Employability of Graduates	306	20.07	1.41			

P<0.05 at 0.05 alpha level

It can be deduced from table eight that the p value of 0.001 is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between quality of graduates and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state is rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between quality of graduates and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara state.

Discussion of Findings

The answer to research question one indicated that the image of polytechnics in Kwara state are fairly good. It is a general opinion among the respondents that many students bribe their way out of the institutions; many use threat to get the lecturers to give them high score. Some were of the opinion that sometimes hand-out purchase serves as the continuous assessment. Olins (2008) believe that image cannot be divorced from reality. That the image is an expression of the corporate personality and that co-ordinated and consistent communication to external and internal publics is fundamental to the management of the corporate image. Hence, what people see and hear is what they believe and what they act upon. This does not necessarily mean that the image is bad but if what it portrays is bad, then people judge the institution from that angle. Bernstein (2014) observed that majority of young and bright students, just fresh from secondary school are found within the four walls of the university compared to the polytechnics. Thus, most university graduates are of higher intellectual quality than their polytechnic counterparts.

The answer to research question two revealed that the employers of labour are not really willing to employ polytechnic graduates. Hence, it was concluded that polytechnic graduates are lowly employable. Though many of the employers of labour who were the respondents agreed to an extent that many of the graduates are competent but majority of the respondents revealed that many of the polytechnics are likely to be aggressive emanating from the fact that cultism is prevalent in the institutions and the hostility of the environment. Oyesiku, (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 producing 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. This is mainly because many of the so graduates are not employable.

The testing of the main hypothesis resulted in its rejection. Thus, there is significant relationship between corporate image and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State. This conforms to the findings of Coetzee, (2017), that the prevalent cultism and students' riot in polytechnics in Nigeria is adversely



affecting the image of the polytechnics and this may also influence the willingness of employers of labour to employ the graduates. Many stakeholders in Kwara State believe that the admission process of polytechnic in Kwara State is not credible. Once you have money or know some elites, getting admission is guaranteed. The same goes for the academic integrity where students are believed to buy their way through the programme especially in cash. The conducts of many of the students are not also encouraging probably because of the environment they were exposed to or due to the series of cultism and other issues.

The finding from the testing of hypothesis one revealed that there is significant relationship between academic integrity and employment of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State. The believe of many stakeholders is that students who have money to spend to purchase handouts, bribe lecturers as well as do all that the lecturers want financially is most likely to graduate with flying colour. It is a common thing for lecturers to sell handouts and use purchase of those handouts has their continuous assessment. Students' attendance is not mandatory and some may not even write examinations but once "they fulfil all righteousness" they are likely to graduate with flying colours. These observations conformed to the findings of Ogunjobi (2018) that non-payment or delay of lecturers' salary and even poor salary structure in many tertiary institutions contributed immensely to the rate at which lecturers extort students, dampened their morale towards efficiency and therefore worsen the academic integrity of some of these institutions in Nigeria.

The rejection of operational hypothesis two showed that there is significant relationship between students' conduct and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State. A high percentage of the respondents were of opinion that polytechnic students that they have encountered do not follow directive, majority are rude, do not follow regulations and not punctual. The admission process is mainly by who you know and not really by achievement. Hence the quality of graduates is bound to be low. This is supported by Etim (2017), who observed that B.Sc is superior to HND because the entrance qualification to the university is more stringent than that to the polytechnic. Universities are much more funded than polytechnics. One of the metrics for determining the quality of an institution is the level of funding.

The findings from the testing of operational hypothesis three showed that there is significant relationship between admission process and employability of polytechnic graduates in Kwara State. As observed by Oyesiku (2010), admission in polytechnics is not mainly based on merit but on highest bidder who can offer something in return. Akanmu (2011) further stressed that faulty admission process is one of the factors responsible for all the menace of cultism, bad students' conduct and eventually poor or half-baked graduates which eventually negatively influence the employability of the graduates of these polytechnics.

The rejection of operational hypothesis four revealed that there is significant relationship between quality of graduates and employability of graduates. This conforms to the view of Etim (2017) who revealed that students in the polytechnics are young and bright, but these bright ones are few. Etim further observed that majority of young and bright students, just fresh from secondary school are found within the four walls of the university. More so, the polytechnic are usually second choices of students carrier. In other words, many students opt for polytechnics after they might have been denied admission into the university. Thus, the quality ones are usually at university or products of university while the left overs are usually the products of polytechnics. There are few exceptions but that's the general view.

Conclusion

At times, the identity and image of a company can be poorly matched, which means that the employee's perception of their own organization differs from the picture the external observers has of the organization. This difference might result from the organization communicating or projecting an image that does not

mirror its identity or the external factors might have misunderstood the intention of the organisation. Regardless of the reasons, it is important that the gap is dealt with as soon as possible. A substantial gap between the self - perception of the organizations and the perception of external public can have fateful consequences for the institution and the bigger the discrepancy, the greater the risk for the organization's wellbeing (Whetten, 2005). It is concluded that good community relations, education of employees, and good communication increases the chances of an improved corporate image. Once there is an improved image or very good populace perception of the polytechnic, their willingness to interact and employ the products of these polytechnics is bound to improve.

Recommendations

- i. The remunerations of lecturers of the polytechnics should also be improved so as to reduce the temptation of extorting the students thereby improving the academic integrity of the polytechnics.
- ii. Strict disciplinary measures should be put in place to sanction erring students so that the conduct of the students can be better both within and outside the institutions.
- iii. The admission process should be improved upon by the polytechnics' administrators. Admission should follow due process and functional criteria should be put in place and implemented to the core.
- iv. Government should endeavour to improve the on the provision of required educational resources to polytechnics to ensure that quality graduates are produced from the institutions.

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