The Influence of Universities Curricular Towards Graduates Employment in Morogoro Municipality

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at exploring the influence of universities curricular toward graduate’s employment in Morogoro Municipality. Three universities and ten institutions within Morogoro Municipality were selected. The data was collected through interviews and focus group discussion to determine the current universities curricular and their influence on graduate's employment. Validity of data collection was tested using a pilot study. Reliability was tested and a coefficient of 0.7 was realized, which was considered reliable. Qualitative data was coded thematically for easier narration. The study results reveal that, the current universities curricular prepare graduates for being employed only, although graduates are prepared for being employed in various public and private institutions, the study obtained that most of them are not employable because what they learned in universities and skills required in the labour market are two different things (mismatch of skills). Also they were prepared theoretical while employers prefer hiring graduates who are able to work practically.

Keywords: Education; graduates employment; knowledge and skills.

1. INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is among the biggest challenges in most of the nations around the world. It is an ongoing problem that affects both developing and developed nations. Unemployment is well-defined as the situation of which an individual is staying without having an official job or existing
Without a job or percentage of individuals which are capable to work and keenly looking for jobs but they are incapable to get a job. Unemployment reveals the inability of a national economy to make full utilization of labor resources available [1]. The absence of labor force renovation upsurges the number of jobless individuals, leading to a high rate of unemployment. A large number of unemployed people indicates a labor-market insufficiency, which leads to increased poverty and lower living standards.

According to ILO [2], unemployment is well-defined as including all the individuals above an identified age who throughout their working age are deprived of work, which means they are not in paid work or self-employment throughout their working age. Most of them are looking for job, means they have already engaged certain paces in a required current passé paying jobs or self-employment. Indicated places can involve registering at a communal or secretive occupation interchange: submission to companies; examination at workplaces, workshop entrances, marketplaces or different assemblage locations, assigning or replying newsprint posters; looking for the support of networks or families; looking for property, premises, machines or apparatus to institute own businesses; examining at workplaces, occupation interchange: submission to registering at a communal or secretive employment. Indicated places can involve in a required current passé paying jobs or self-employment. Such a mismatch makes solutions to the youth employment crisis more difficult to find and more time consuming to implement (ILO, 2013).

A study done by UNESCO [6], stated that in the year 2010, the worldwide unemployment rate had increased to 6.2% compared to 5.6% in the year 2007. Because of this, it has contributed to a highly competitive environment for younger people between the ages of 18-30 years. A study by World Bank (2014), stated that, high percent of jobless graduates contributes to the overall unemployment. It includes the fresh graduates.

The Ministry of Higher Education said, a quarter of all graduates in 2012 have not obtained employment at the time of graduation, and the World Bank finds that in 2012 almost 1/5 of degree holders below the age of 28 were unemployed. Unfortunately, a large portion of the unemployed graduates are from the study field of Social Science, Business and Law with 39.4%, followed by Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction with 21.7% and Science, Mathematics and Computing with 17.9% [7].

Unemployment has remained one of the intractable problems facing Tanzania since the 1970s, when the country went through an economic crisis reflected by the fall in the annual GDP growth rate from 5% to an average of 2.6% in the early 1980s, and about 1% in the beginning of the 1990s [8]. Since the mid-1980s, Tanzania has embarked on implementing a series of economic reforms that have gradually placed the economy on a sounder footing, including lowering graduate unemployment.

According to Nangale [3], the economically active population in Tanzania in 2005/06 was estimated to be 18.8 million. This represents between 800,000 and 1,000,000, university graduates living in all localities facing the highest rate of unemployment at 13% for females and 10% for males. With youth (15-24 years), unemployment is highest among female youths at 15.4%, as compared to 14.3% for males.
Currently, Tanzania has been recognized as having a strong genuine Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate, which is determined to be 7.1 percent in 2002 and 8.4 percent in 2007. Although, this notion has been regarded as a contradiction, the reason is that the nation is experiencing strong economic growth at a rate of 7.2 percent. Unemployment rose from 2 percent in 2005 to 2.9 percent in 2013, but fell to 2.3 percent in 2016 as a result of government initiatives such as the National Employment Policy [1]. This situation is disgraceful in regard that the nation is blessed with sufficient resources, both human and natural resources (land, minerals, and aquatic resources) that it should be able to utilize and create employment opportunities for the large number graduates in Tanzania.

The problem of graduate unemployment has become a threat to the social, economic, and political stability in most developing countries including Tanzania. Economically, unemployment has led to labor market instability, increased welfare costs, erosion of the tax base, and unused investments in education and training [9]. Socially, graduate unemployment is not only of concern to the unemployed ones but also to the society and family members. It is the expectation of most young people to find employment, especially after completing their education. Failure to find employment results into demoralization, depreciation of their human capital, and deterioration in their employment prospects, which leads to social exclusion [10]. Evidence has revealed that graduate unemployment results in malnutrition, mental illness, and loss of self-confidence, resulting in depression. It is also associated with high stress, leading to people committing suicide and poor physical health and heart attacks in later life [11]. Graduates’ unemployment also brings stress to the societies and families who after high investment in the graduate’s education, expect them to be employed and hence contribute to the family and society’s growth. There are also cases of graduates who cannot find employment who engage in criminal activities, drug addiction, and prostitution, which take them away from normal labor markets. On the African continent, graduates’ unemployment has highly contributed to most youth engaging in crime and violence and has fueled the high prevalence of civil conflicts in the region [12]. Graduates’ unemployment has also contributed to the increase in international legal and illegal migration with a notion that it will enable them to get decent employment as well as a better life. Against this background, the current research study was set to investigate the influence of universities curricular towards graduate’s employment in Morogoro Municipality.

1.1 Analytical and Theoretical Framework

The study was mainly guided by constructivist learning theory. The word constructivism comes from the root word construct, which means building [13]. The formalization of constructivism from a within-the-human perspective is generally attributed to Jean Piaget, who articulated mechanisms by which information from the environment and ideas from an individual interact and result in internalized structures developed by learners [14]. Constructivism is first of all a theory of learning based on the idea that knowledge is constructed by the knower based on mental activity. Learners are considered to be active organisms seeking meaning.

Constructivism is an important learning theory that educators use to help their students learn. Constructivism is based on the idea that people actively construct or make their own knowledge, and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner. Basically, learners use their previous knowledge as a foundation and build on it with new things that they learn. So everyone's individual experiences make their learning unique to them. There are many specific elements and principles of constructivism that shape the way the theory works and applies to students. In a broad sense, constructivism is based on the following principles:

- Knowledge is constructed. This is the basic principle, meaning that knowledge is built upon other knowledge.
- People learn to learn, as they learn. Learning involves constructing meaning and systems of meaning.
- Learning is an active process. Learning involves sensory input to construct meaning. The learner needs to do something in order to learn, it’s not a passive activity.
- Learning is a social activity. Learning is directly associated with our connection with other people.
- Learning is contextual. Students don’t learn isolated facts and theories separate from the rest of our lives; we learn in ways connected to things we already know, what we believe, and more.
The emphasis on constructivism theory is that the curriculum should provide experiences and rich environments that promote opportunities for students to learn and understand as active participants rather than as passive students. It is suggested that technology should be employed to provide the richest possible active environment [15]. It is possible that learning from this perspective is much better and that it is under the control of the learner. Hence, a learner must acquire ownership. The emphasis here is that the curriculum should pay attention to students’ prior knowledge and their goals. New perceptions are needed to create new knowledge because it is difficult to feed information and expect it to be absorbed, because the learner has to fit to the available knowledge, goals, and attitudes.

On the other hand, the weakness of the constructivism theory is that it calls for the teacher to discard standardized curriculum in favor or a more personalized course of study based on what the student already knows. This could lead some students to fall behind others [16]. It also removes grading in the traditional way and instead places more values on students evaluating their own progress, which may lead to students falling behind as without standardized grading and evaluations teachers may not know that the student is struggling. Since there is no evaluation in the traditional sense, students may not be creating knowledge as the theory asserts, but just be copying what other students are doing.

Another disadvantage is that it can easily lead into students’ confusion due to the fact they may not have the ability to form a relationship between the knowledge they already have and the knowledge learnt by themselves. More specifically, the primary shortcoming remains the lack of structure. Some students require highly structured environments in order to be able to excel.

Despite the identified weaknesses, the researcher sees that the theory was found very appropriate to this study in that it emphasises the curriculum should provide experiences and rich environments that promote opportunities for students to learn and understand as active participants rather than as passive students.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework describes favourable condition for employment and results relating to the study of graduates’ unemployment in Morogoro municipal.

![Fig. 1. Conceptual framework guiding the study](Source: Researcher own creation (2021))
Fig. 1 above shows the interrelationship between favourable conditions for employment, and results in such a way that favourable conditions for employment if considered, will help to bring changes by increasing employment to graduates. Therefore, Good curriculum, quality graduates employment policy, financial support, graduates themselves, creation of more jobs, no need of work experience and promotion of conducive atmosphere for investment have direct influence of increasing graduates’ employment in Tanzania.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed case study research design based on qualitative research approach. A case study is a type of qualitative analysis that entails the careful and comprehensive observation of a social unit, such as a person, a family, an institution, a cultural group, or even an entire community, involving the full analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their interrelationships. The reason for using this case study research design was to enable the researcher to investigate in-depth the influence of universities curricular towards graduate’s employment, where the views of teachers, graduates, and employers were intensively considered.

A total of 55 respondents were selected i.e., thirty five graduates, fifteen universities lecturers and ten employers from different institutions within Morogoro Municipality. Data were collected through focus group discussions and interviews to determine the influence of universities curricular towards graduate’s employment. Moreover, validity of the data collection was tested using a pilot study. Reliability was tested and a coefficient of 0.7 was realized, which was considered reliable. The qualitative data was coded thematically for easier narration.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to explore the influence of universities curricular towards graduates’ employment. The following are the summary and results of respondents’ views on the influence of universities curricular towards graduates’ employment.

3.1 Current Curricular

When graduates were asked how they think about current universities curricular in relation to preparing graduates to work, the collected data through interview and focus group discussion shows that, what they learned in universities prepare them for being employed and not employing themselves (self-employment). About this graduates said:

The current curriculum does not provide students with self-employment education based solely on being employed. Therefore, it makes graduates when they finish their studies waiting to be hired. (Graduate 9 from University "A")

I think the current curriculum prepares graduates to be employed and when we are taught we are told the day you are hired will be this and that. (Graduate 8 from University “A”)

The results from this study revealed that, the current universities curricular prepare graduates for being employed only because when they were in universities they were taught only to know their profession. There was no self-employment education that would help graduates become self-employed in case they lack employment in both government and private sectors. Though there was entrepreneurship training which conducted within one or two weeks was not enough to enable graduates to acquire entrepreneurship skills. It is also observed that when teachers or lecturers are teaching they convince students to believe when they finish their studies they will be employed. So their mind set remains knowing that after graduation they will be hired.

The findings above indicate that although graduates are prepared for being employed in various public and private institutions, the study obtained that most of them are not employable because what they learned in universities and skills required in the labour market are two different things (mismatch of skills). Also they were prepared theoretically while employers prefer hiring graduates who are able to work practically.

This finding are in line with a study which looked at how students perceive employability in higher education in South Africa. Walker [17] found that there is a misalignment between theory and knowledge applications through practical work in nearly all degree programmes of the sampled universities. Dai et al. [18] argued that higher educational institution courses have mainly been
too theoretical and have neglected to prepare their students for the workplace. Other studies [19,20] argue that there could be a problem regarding the expectations of companies and what graduates bring to the table, which may be misaligned. Likewise, Otaru [21] found that higher unemployment rate is due to the fact that most people in Tanzania have no skills (employable). Skills requirement in the labour market are not compatible with skills supply (mismatch of skills).

Moreover, the study revealed that, the current universities curricular is good at preparing graduates to employment both being employable and employing themselves. For example, the following teachers said:

*The curriculum by itself is good at preparing graduates to be independent and competent after graduation because most of the content provokes individual or independent learning. Therefore, if the teachers implement well what is in the curriculum, graduates they can able to be employable and employ themselves. The question is does the university environment support the implementation of curriculum? In reality we don't have 100% environment that support curriculum implementation. For example, we lack tools for conducting practical learning, which are stipulated in our curriculum, and large classes, for example, 300 students in one class.* (Teacher 2 from University “A”)

*The curriculum itself as documents is not bad it has limitations but it is not bad at all. The problem is implementation means how can we put it into practice is very problem. The curriculum address constructivism and learner centered so can we put into practice with 400 students in a class? So to me is half to half. There are two things here first: In university lecturer are not teachers by professional so sometimes they are not competent in term of translating and implementing a curriculum. Second: the context means the ratio of lecturers and students is not the same, sometimes you can find the number of students is very large thus why we end up with group work and lecturing. Therefore, the curriculum document is ok the problem is how do we implement it.* (Teacher 3 from University “A”)

The study findings above benefit from the study findings which revealed the current universities curricular is good at preparing graduates to employment both being employable and employing themselves, because most of content provoke individual and independent learning. The problems first are students themselves because when they are in universities they don’t like to study. They study to get marks and not skills. They do not like to know what their teachers are teaching them and how to apply it in their daily lives. All they care about is passing the examinations. In this situation it is difficult for them to gain employable skills. Second are implementation means that what is in the curricular sometime is not implemented as intended in the classroom. The reasons for not implemented as intended are; firstly, most universities lecturer are not teachers by profession, so most of them are not competent in translating the intended curricular into practice. Second, the ratio of teachers and students are not the same, the number of students is larger than the number of teachers. In view of these findings, it was recommended that regular training for in-service lecturers should be conducted in order to enable them acquire up-to-date teaching skills as required by the changes introduced in the university curricular.

This is supported by the study on the urban youth unemployment by Simon [22] which revealed that the discrepancy between knowledge, skills youth receive in schools is another critical reason for high graduates unemployment. This is due to the fact that Tanzania education system mainly characterized by students struggling passing final exams as schools of all kind have become too much like exam factories, concentrating their energies on securing passes at A grade in exams and have given too little attention to the labour market requirements. The scramble for good academic results has also been at the cost of genuine learning and creative teaching and innovation, hence this contributed a lot for most of the graduates to fall to help themselves when it come to the challenge of employment.

The findings also supported the study conducted by Komba and Mwandanji [23] on reflections on implementation of competence based curriculum in secondary schools, Tanzania. The findings indicated that the majority (86%) of the interviewed teachers did not have the proper understanding of the objectives of competence based curriculum. Therefore, from findings on teachers’ competences, the study has revealed that before implementing new curriculum the
preparation of teachers is of crucial importance to make them aware of the curriculum.

3.2 Skills Needed by Private Sectors

In answering this question how do the universities curricular align with the skills needed by private sectors to provide employment to graduates, most of graduates who responded to this question expressed their opinion that in private sector they want graduates with work experience while most of graduates when they finish their studies they don't have work experience. About this, graduates said:

I think no because most of graduates do not have work experience and the private sector needs work experience. We lack work experience because when we are in university we learnt much through theory and not practical. Work experience does not mean only how long you have worked somewhere but also what have you done in your field of specialization that you are proud of given you work experience. (Graduate 9 from University "C")

I think no, because we a taught more theoretical than practical and private sector needs graduate who are more practical than theoretical. (Graduate 5 from University “A”)

The findings from this study revealed that, most of graduates do not have enough skills or knowledge required by private sectors because when they were in universities, they were taught theoretically while private sectors prefer to hire someone who has good practical skills. Furthermore, when they are in universities they learn more in the classroom than interacting with the real work environment. The situation leads many of them lack work experience that is needed by private sectors when providing employments or jobs to graduates. The study finding can be supported by that of Rwejuna [26] which confirm the scenario of inappropriate curricular which are insensitive to the labour market by stating that, “since its establishment, Open University College (OUT) has not comprehensively reviewed its curriculum.” That situation means that some courses are outdated and not relevant in the job market; as a result, they contribute to graduates unemployment. Likewise, Kolawole and Arikpo [27] examining predictors of employment efforts among unemployed Nigerian graduates found that the inappropriate curriculum was the major factor. The curriculum does not change with changes in the labour market. As a result, graduates are claimed not to possess adequate competencies needed by employers or the skill to employ themselves.

3.3 Employability Skills

The employability skills are both important to the employers for recruitment of right candidates and to an individual for being able to secure a job, retain employment and move flexibly in the job market as well as for lifelong learning. The collected data through interview with lectures and employers and focus group discussion with graduates shows that our university education system does not develop graduates employability skills because is class oriented and they learn much through theory without interacting with their environment through practical activities. They said:

No because we were taught theoretically, to gain job skills it needs to learn more practically. (Graduate 8 from University ”B")

No because the way we implement our curriculum we just focus on theory and not practical. The package is full of theory and not practical. The curriculum says a lot about practical but the reality is not ok. (Teacher 3from University “A”)

No because the university curriculum is more theoretical than practical. The students they
get practical learning only through field training which take a short period of time (6 or 8 weeks). (Employer 1 from institution A)

The findings from this study revealed that, our universities education system does not develop graduates employability skills because most graduates when they finish their studies don’t have skills, knowledge, and competence that enhance ability to secure jobs more easily in the labour market. This is because when they are in universities most of the courses they learn too theoretical. It is also revealed that most of our graduates are not competent in terms of communication and English language skills while most employers especially in private sectors consider good communication and English language skills as criteria when recruiting new employees. Furthermore, it revealed that most graduates are not competent in term of using information and communication technology (ICT) because they studied this course through theory, so they have only theoretical knowledge of ICT. Finally, it disclosed that few graduates from our universities finish their studies with problem solving skills because what they learned was full of theory than practical.

The finding can be supported by that of Anderson [28] who did a study on graduate’s perception of the contribution of university education to graduates employment in Tanzania. The findings indicated that 63% of the respondent show that graduates have doubts in the relevance of university curriculum for graduate’s future careers. This is because University students have only theoretical knowledge about the requirement of their future career and this knowledge is not enough for them to excel in the labor market. Also the curriculum misses the competencies and capabilities that will allow graduates to win in the labor market.

The findings also are in line with a study carried out by Nuru Kalufya and Lucas Mwakajinga at the Institute of Social Work in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2016 which highlights the blame extended to Institutions of Higher Learning for producing graduates who do not satisfy expectations of employers [29]. The researchers associated the employability challenges with the lack of self-awareness among the graduates, low level of interpersonal skills, lack of problem solving skills, low level of teamwork spirit, and lacking link between theoretical learning in class and the practical employability in the job industry.

These findings are in line with a study which looked at how students perceive employability in higher education in South Africa, Walker [17] found that there is a misalignment between theory and knowledge applications through practical work in nearly all degree programmes of the sampled universities. Dai et al. [18] argued that higher educational institution courses have mainly been too theoretical and have neglected to prepare their students for the workplace. Other [19,20] argue that there could be a problem regarding the expectations of companies and what graduates bring to the table, which may be misaligned. Likewise, Otaru [21] found that higher unemployment rate is due to the fact that most people in Tanzania have no skills (employable). Skills requirement in the labour market not compatible with skills supply (mismatch of skills).

3.4 Practical Learning

During individual and group interviews, the teachers and graduates were asked to explain if universities curricular stipulate practical learning. They said:

Yes, we learned through practical though for a short time for example we went for field practice for 8 weeks per year twice time within three years of my study. (Graduate 7 from University “B”)

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Yes we have more practical and field practical aim at giving practical experience. For example we have a field attachment for vet students for 3-4 months for last year for the student to choose where he/she wants to go and when they returns they writes a report on what they did. (Teacher 5 from University “A”)

The results from this study revealed that, the curriculum documents stipulate enough time for hand on skills (practical learning) that should be conducted in classroom session and during field practice in order to prepare graduates for employment. But in reality the time located for hand on skills is not implemented in classroom. Most teachers or lecturers prefer teaching through theory and ignoring practical as located.
in the curriculum documents. For example, the curriculum recommends 8 weeks for field practice but sometimes broken up to 6 weeks. This causes students to lack knowledge or skills of practical experience that is required at work and in the labour market.

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Moreover, this study revealed that, sometimes universities environment does not support the implementation of practical session due to large classes, for example, 800 students in one classroom and lack of tools for practical learning. Therefore, there is no 100% environment that supports curricular implementation in universities. That is why lecturers end up with group work and lecturing.

Furthermore, the study finding supported what Tambwe [30] studied on challenges facing implementation of competence based education and training (CBET) system in Tanzania technical institutions. The findings indicated that the majority of 85% of interviewed respondents outline large class size as a challenge facing CBET implementation because it tends to affect students-teachers interactions and even prevent students-students exchange during discussions in the class. In views of these findings, it was recommended that there was a need to improve universities environments like to ensure there are enough tools for practical learning in order to enable lecturers to conduct practical sessions as located in curricula.

3.5 Strategies Used by Universities

When graduates were asked which strategies they were used by universities lecturers in preparing them to the world of employment, graduates gave some methods as shows here: group assignment, individual assignment, field training, question and answer and lecture. In that regard, the graduates reported:

**We were trained much through lecture where the lecturer was the main speaker of the lesson.** (Graduate 2 from University “A”)

**Sometimes lecturer used question and answer in preparing us for the world of work.** (Graduate 6 from University “B”)

**When we were given group work only one student he was doing that work on behalf of the group members.** (Graduate 9 from University “A”)

The findings from this study revealed that, the suggested strategies/methods which are recommended by TCU [31] in the university Qualification Framework (UQF) like, seminar, tutorial, independent studies and research and practical training were not used by teachers or lecturers in preparing graduates for the worlds of employment. The most frequently used strategies were lecture, question and answer, group assignment and field training. From the graduates and lecturers view the lecture method was dominating followed by group assignments, question and answer and field training. In view of these findings it was recommended that, the strategies which are recommended by TCU in University Qualification Framework, were also to be used in preparing graduates for the jobs as it will help prepare graduates with employability skills.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the study findings it can be concluded that universities curricular is not bad at all in preparing graduates for employment because it details a lot of skills that can help graduates to be employable. Such skills include problem solving, information and communications technology (ICT) and communication and language skills. Therefore, regular training for in service lecturers should be conducted in order to enable them acquire up-to-date teaching skills as required by the change introduced in the curriculum. Furthermore, government has to emphasize on practical learning in each stage of learning as a means of teaching the students competent skills which can enable them to be employed or self-employed. Moreover, both non-government and government universities should emphasize on entrepreneurship education provision so as to enable the students get entrepreneurial skills which help them to employ themselves.
CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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