

Assessing Graduate Employability Skills: A Case of Community Development Students at Pan Africa Christian (PAC) University, Nairobi Kenya

Background

Graduate unemployment in Kenya has greatly been on the rise for the last two decades. According to Nation Business daily article “Universities with jobless graduates to miss State funds” stated that Kenya was grappling with a large number of jobless graduates with an economy that is struggling to create new jobs. (Business Baily, Friday November 26 2021) The rise in high numbers of graduates that are unemployed being attributed to the number of students enrolled in Kenyan universities having surged in the recent years, from both public and private universities. Secondly, perception on graduate employability is an increasingly serious problem in Kenya, especially among employers. With employers laying the blame on the quality of training provided by the universities, which has, in their view, created a pool of unemployed graduates in the labour market that is experiencing skill shortages (British Council IHE Report, 2018). The British council report on “Universities, Employability and Inclusive Development reported that most employers were not very confident that the institutions of higher learning would continue to produce graduates with the right attitude to work. A positive attitude and flexibility to work have been considered key attributes that employers look for in graduates. As survey conducted by the Aga Khan University revealed that, positive attitudes and ethical considerations seem to be largely lacking among graduates coming out of Kenyan universities. The perception by employers that universities will not be able to produce people with such attitudes means that institutions need to do more to change the world view of their graduates as regards the world of work. Thirdly, with most graduates realization on reality of a shrinking formal job market. Most students are considering self-employment as a better alternative compared to formal employment where entry required more than formal qualifications. The realism of student aspirations means that universities should prepare students for self-employment rather than focusing solely on training for formal sector employment. The British Council report revealed that skills such as leadership, business awareness, organisational planning and time management, teamwork, communication and presentation skills; appreciation of cultural diversity; honesty and integrity. That would prepare students for self-employment were largely lacking in the Universities. The report also revealed weak career services provided by universities, lack of opportunities in their universities to develop various generic skills a response that ties in with that of employers when commenting on the quality of graduates.

Graduate employability means that higher education alumni have developed the capacity to obtain work and/or create work through self-employment. Employability means that institutions and employers have supported the students knowledge, skills, attributes, reflective disposition, and identity that graduate needs to succeed in the workforce. Due to the wide range and different thoughts defining employability, this project defines graduate employability according to The LTSN Generic Centre *Circular 5* (2003, p. 1) which states that “*Graduate employability is more than being able to find a job immediately after graduation. Rather it is the individual's ability to make an effective ongoing contribution to society, and lead a satisfying life thereafter. It includes qualities like resilience and resourcefulness, as well as technical knowledge and the ability to continue to learn in a changing environment.*” The Centre continues to state that these qualities are

developed through the whole range of experiences which higher education offers. The project therefore seeks to be more intentional in developing these qualities among all community development students by developing a departmental guidelines on graduate employability. It's envisaged that the guidelines will create understanding to all lecturers on their role and responsibility in graduate employability, as well as shape our students knowledge, attitude and practices in regard to employability.

Objectives

To assess community development lecturer and students' knowledge on graduate employability

To examine community development lecturer and students attitudes on graduate employability

To identify community development lecturer and students' practices on graduate employability

To create lecturer awareness on their role in graduate employability

To create awareness on graduate employability to the students

To Develop graduate employability guidelines for the department