

Original Research Article

The Influence of Universities Curricular Toward Graduates Employment in Morogoro Municipality

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 they 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.

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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 of or existing without a job or percent 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 (World Bank, 1994). 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.

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According to ILO (1982), 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 paces 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, organizing for pecuniary assets; smearing for certification and authorization.

Employment is a crucial aspect of any human being, especially for young people as they journey towards adulthood (Nangale, 2012). Families and schools play a vital role in helping youth explore careers that match their strengths and interests and in helping them understand the importance of building basic work skills so they are prepared for employment (NCWD, 2012). Young learners' complete schools and even colleg

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they don't get permanent employment. Graduate unemployment has come to be among the major challenges in Tanzania (Msigwa&Kipasha, 2013).

Globally, youth unemployment was estimated at 12.6 per cent in 2013, and this has been pointed out as a "crisis". At the same time, as many as 73 million young people are estimated to be unemployed in 2013. At the same time, informal employment among young people remains pervasive, and transitions to decent work are slow and difficult. The economic and social costs of unemployment, long-term unemployment, discouragement, and widespread low-quality jobs for young people continue to rise and undermine economies' growth potential. Skills mismatch is adding to the youth employment crisis. Skills mismatch in youth labor markets has become a persistent and growing trend. Over education and over-skills coexist with under education and under-skills, and increasingly with skills obsolescence brought about by long-term unemployment. 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 (2012), 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 % (Razak et al., 2014).

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 (URT, 2000). 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 (2012), 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% in 2002 and 8.4% 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% 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 (World Bank, 2017). 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's able to utilize and create employment opportunities for the crowded 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 (ILO, 2011). 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 of 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 (Clark & Summers 1982). Evidence has revealed that graduate unemployment results in malnutrition, mental illness, and loss of

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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 (Sum et al, 2002). Graduates' unemployment also brings stress to the societies and families which 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 (Natrass, 2002b). 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 toward graduate's employment in Morogoro Municipality.

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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 (Ko, 2013). 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 (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). 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 (Solomon 2009). 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.

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On the other hand, the weakness of the constructivism theory is that it calls for the teacher to discard standardized curriculum in favor of a more personalized course of study based on what the student already knows. This could lead some students to fall behind of others (Kerry & Wilding, 2004). It also removes grading

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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 weakness, the researcher sees that the theory was found very lucrative to this study in that it emphasizes 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.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework describes the independent variables and dependent variables related to the graduates' unemployment in Morogoro municipal.

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Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Guiding the Study

Source: Researcher own creation (2022)

Figure 1 above shows the interrelationship between independent variables, and dependent variables in such a way that independent variables bring changes to dependent variables. Good government support on graduates' employment, good labour market, good curricular, good curricular implementation, graduates themselves, and knowledge and skills have direct influence over the dependent variable Increase of graduates' employment.

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2. MATERIAL AND METHODS / EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS / METHODOLOGY

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 lecturer 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

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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 professional. 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 use words that convince students to believe that 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 they 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.

This finding are in line with a study which looked at how students perceive employability in higher education in South Africa. Walker (2015) 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. (2008) argued that higher educational institution courses have mainly been too theoretical and have neglected to prepare their students for the workplace. Other studies (Griesel & Parker, 2009; MacGregor, 2007) 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 (2012) found that higher unemployment rate is due to the fact that most of 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 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 employment 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 of universities lecturer are not teachers by professional, so most of them they 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.

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This is supported by the study on the urban youth unemployment by Simon (2013) which revealed that the discrepancy between knowledge, skills youth receive in schools is another critical reason for high graduates unemployment, 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.

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The findings also supported the study conducted by Komba and Mwandaji (2015) 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.

Skills Needed by Private Sectors

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 Irima (2014) in which it was found that the population most at risk of unemployment is generally the educated youth entering the labour market for the first time (full stop) one reason for higher youth unemployment rates is that first time job seekers, who are mainly young, face greater difficulty owing to lack of work experience and, often, limited access to job vacancy information. Likewise (comma) Kinga (2005) found that there are young people looking for jobs in the market, but the employers in the private sector prefer the ones with prior job experiences. Employers normally do not want employees who are fresh out of school without prior skills and experience.

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Moreover, this study revealed that, universities obviously involve stakeholders like private sectors when developing their curricular, the challenge is private sectors are dynamic (semi-colon) they are changing every day according to the development of science and technology while the curricular when developed it takes time to be reviewed and changed. The study finding can be supported by that of Rwejuna (2013:54) in which confirms the scenario of inappropriate curricular which are insensitive to the labour market by stating that, "since its establishment, 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 (2008) 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.

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Employability Skills

The employability skills are both important to the employers for recruitment of right candidates but also 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. Employability involves much more than the ability of an individual to secure that first job. It entails having the capability to network and market oneself, traverse through a career and remain employable throughout life. It requires the ability to ask questions, acquire new skills, identify and evaluate options, flexibility, adapt successfully to changes and to take initiatives (ILO, 2013).

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The findings from this study revealed that, our universities education system does not develop graduates employability skills because most of graduates when they finish their studies they don't have skills, knowledge,

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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 learned too theoretical. It is also revealed that most of our graduates they are not competent in term of communication and English language skills while most of employers especially in private sectors they considers good communication and English language skills as a criteria when recruiting new employees. Furthermore, it revealed that most graduates they 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 who 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 (2017) 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 has doubts in the relevance of university curriculum for graduate's future careers. This is because University students are being full of 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 NuruKalufya 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 (Kalufya and Mwakajinga, 2016: 51, 53). 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.

This findings are in line with a study which looked at how students perceive employability in higher education in South Africa, Walker (2015) 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. (2008) argued that higher educational institution courses have mainly been too theoretical and have neglected to prepare their students for the workplace. Other studies (Griesel & Parker, 2009; MacGregor, 2007) 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 (2012) found that higher unemployment rate is due to the fact that most of people in Tanzania have no skills (employable). Skills requirement in the labour market not compatible with skills supply (mismatch of skills).

Moreover, the finding also are in line with what Hanapi and Nordin (2013) found that a notable number of Malaysian employers have a negative perception towards the graduates and have stated that the graduates lack the suitable skills and qualifications which are required by the industry. Moreover, the graduates fail to demonstrate a good working performance and they are poor in the aspect of employability skills. In views of these findings it recommended that, the way students are prepared in higher education, cannot be accomplished by using theoretical knowledge alone (Eraut 1994). Working life requires practical and situational knowledge, professional experience and judgment (Eraut 1994). Furthermore, practical and theoretical knowledge support the use and applicability of each other.

Practical Learning

The results from this study revealed that, the curriculum documents it 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 to employment. But in reality the time located for hand on skills is not implemented in classroom. Most teachers or lecturer prefer teaching through theory and ignoring practical as located in the curriculum documents. For example, the curriculum guides 8 weeks for field practice but it happen 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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careers. This is because University students are being full of 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.

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Moreover, this study revealed that, sometimes universities environment does not support the implementation of practical session due to large classes (comma) 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 (full stop) that is why lecturers they end up with group work and lecturing.

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Furthermore, the study finding supported what Tambwe (2017) 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 tend 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's.

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Strategies used by Universities

The findings from this study revealed that, the suggested strategies/methods 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 views of these findings it was recommended that, the strategies which are recommended by TCU in University Qualification Framework, they were also to be used in preparing graduates for the jobs as it will help prepare graduates with employability skills.

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4. CONCLUSION

Based on the study findings it can be concluded that universities curricular is not bad at all in preparing graduates to 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 acquires 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.

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CONSENT (WHEREEVER APPLICABLE)

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

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