

Graduate Employability in Africa: Issues, Challenges and Way Forward

Jonathan Stephen Mbwambo¹, Raymond Salanga²

^{1,2} Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania

Abstract

The development of higher education in Africa has undergone various stages from pre-colonial times. Each stage of development is associated with unique features emanating from policies and programs used to develop the same. Recently, governments in Africa are investing in the expansion of higher education with enrolment raising to 9.4%. While Africa continues to expand the enrolment rates to match up with the global enrolment of 38%, the number of graduates absorbed by the labor market is very low. Nearly 45% of African graduates are unemployed, underemployed, or employed for food. The study was done to investigate issues and challenges for graduate employability in Africa. Using the descriptive and narrative analysis of literature, the study revealed that unemployment in Africa is contributed by factors beyond the classroom environment. Factors such as individual factors, individual circumstances, household factors, organizational practices, and macro-level factors are responsible for determining the possibility of a graduate being employable. Thus, the employability of a graduate cannot be a result of being a university graduate alone but a combination of factors occurring within and outside the university. These findings correspond with employers' needs and demands which, as described in this paper, range from the willingness to learn, teamwork, interpersonal skills, and commitment to name but a few. The paper concludes that while universities are responsible for providing knowledge and skills, their roles must be expanded to nurture non-disciplinary skills or reinforce soft skills demanded by employers. Development and operationalization of career guidance and coaching units and the introduction of modules for nurturing employability skills are some of the recommendations provided in this article.

Keywords: employability, skills, graduates and employers