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LEARNING, CURRICULUM DESIGN AND EMPLOYABILITY OF UNIVERSITY GRADUATES IN KENYA. A CASE STUDY OF MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The Management University of Africa graduates over 400 students every year in various disciplines. According to the 2022 Employers' Tracer Study carried out by Management University of Africa, 71% of the graduates of 2021 were employed (including the 10% who were self-employed). Over 50 key employers were identified during the survey (Public and Private). One of the key recommendations of the Tracer Study report was to decrease unemployment through the inclusion of stakeholder expectations in the process of curriculum development. In Kenya, despite the rising levels of education, many graduates face very high unemployment rates. This raises questions on the demand and market orientation of the university learning, curriculum development and whether the university course designers are cognizant of labor market trends. It's for this reason this paper sought to investigate the effect of university learning, curriculum design on employability of graduates. Graduates with "employability skills" like teamwork, communication skills, decision making, emotional intelligence, critical thinking and the ability to motivate others to achieve a common goal are in high demand from employers. Investing in employability skills training in the universities is essential for creating a high-performance work culture. The specific objectives of this study are: to find out the effect of teaching methodology on employability and to examine the effect of curriculum design on employability. The study adopted desktop review of market surveys, teaching effectiveness evaluation surveys and tracer studies surveys at Management University of Africa. The study findings were analyzed using themes and presented in charts and tables.

Keywords: *Learning; Curriculum Design; Employability*

INTRODUCTION

Internationally, there has been a growing emphasis on the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in enabling employability and graduate employment, as evidenced by the rise of university graduate employment destinations as an important proxy measure of the value of a university education (Burke, Scurry, Blenkinsopp, & Graley, 2016). According to Rintari (2017),

employability is the ability of the student to get a job after graduation and it is concerned with student's attributes which empower the student as a critical life-long learner. In the dynamic world, employees need to be adaptable and multi skilled with employability skills needed in the labour market. Universities globally should identify a set of skills that will best serve the future labour markets and align university programs to meet those needs. Common employability skills include: Communication Skills, Teamwork and Collaboration, Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking, Adaptability and Flexibility, Time Management, Leadership Skills, Initiative and Pro-activeness, Creativity and Innovation, Interpersonal Skills and Emotional Intelligence (Hansense, 2000).

Oakeshott (2017) depicts a university as a home of learning, a place where a tradition of learning is preserved and extended, and where the necessary apparatus for the pursuit of learning has been gathered together. This view echoes liberal humanist perspectives of higher education as more than the acquisition of skills and behaviours (Stoten, 2018). Intrinsic and subjective motivations form part of going to university apart from its potential economic advantage to the graduate (Kromydas, 2017). However, with globalisation, internationalization and a dramatic rise in for-profit institutions, the role of HEIs is being redefined. Universities are expected to prepare their students for a complex society that demands employees have diverse skills and capacities (Chan, 2016).

Many universities in Australia, New Zealand, and the UK are now including work-integrated learning programs in their degrees with the aim of enhancing graduate employment prospects. Often this perspective is based on the premise that universities should produce 'work-ready' or 'employable' graduates (Tustin et al., 2016). Globally, Kalfa and Taksa (2015) warn against universities being used as a panacea. They argue that employability should be considered in the context of volatility of the job market, attendant job insecurity and scarce fulltime employment. Likewise, Frankham (2017) questioned government imperatives concerning employability on the grounds that they risk higher education becoming a tool in the hands of market-based forces with different priorities and interests to the sector. Despite these concerns, the general consensus in the literature has been that employability is core to higher education (Mawson and Haworth, 2018; Oliver, 2015; Wilks et al., 2017).

In Africa, the majority of HEIs are grappling with the issue of producing graduates ready for employment, primarily due to various institutional factors. A study in Ghana by Guardia (2021) highlights that insufficient supply of instructional materials, large class sizes, inadequate training facilities, and limited connections with local industries for practical hands-on experience, both for instructors and trainees, contribute to the ineffective and inefficient training of students. The emphasis on passing final examinations in HEIs institutions further exacerbates the problem, resulting in a lack of preparedness for the job market and presenting workplace challenges for the graduates. Additionally, according to the Tracer Study carried out by Makerere University on the 2012 graduates 73% of the graduates of 2012 were employed (including the 12% who were self-employed). One of the key recommendations of the Tracer Study report was to decrease unemployment through inclusion of stakeholder expectations in the process of curriculum development. Similarly, (Hossain, 2018) indicated that employers claimed that one of the unemployment problems among recent graduates, including graduates from post-secondary and tertiary learning institutions is a lack of employability skills or generic skills demanded by

industries. Thus, this paper is aimed at finding out the relationship between learning, curriculum and employability skills in private universities in Kenya.

In Kenya, the high rate of graduate unemployment may be directly attributed to deficit of employability skills. Additionally, employee performance relied heavily on the possessor's ability to demonstrate employability skills, which are essential to the growth and prosperity of any organization (Kirui, 2019). The rapid expansion of Kenyan universities has primarily prioritized increasing student enrollment, neglecting a parallel focus on enhancing the quality of education and research. This imbalance in emphasis raises concerns about the overall quality of graduates emerging from Kenyan universities and, consequently, their preparedness in terms of employability skills. The study conducted by Rantiri (2017) suggests a positive correlation between present job competence, job confidence, job involvement, and the employability skills of graduates. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the current challenges in the higher education system to ensure a more comprehensive and effective preparation of graduates for the demands of the job market.

Private Universities are universities established in accordance with the Universities Act 1985(CAP 210B) and the Universities Rules, 1989 (Establishment of Universities, Standardization, accreditation and Supervision). Private universities in Kenya operate under a full charter or an interim charter as they await full charter. The private universities offer both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The Commission for University Education (CUE) is mandated with responsibility of ensuring that private universities adhere to the standards of a university. In Kenya currently we have 36 registered private Universities. Kenya is the leading the East Africa countries of Tanzania and Uganda in the number of private Universities. Private universities in Kenya have notably increased owing to the growing demand for higher education and a subsequent strain on public universities to handle this demand. Kamau (2013) argues that the growth of Private University sector in Kenya has been fuelled by several factors, including: the limited opportunities available in public universities; the constant closures of state funded universities; the need to complement government- managed higher institutions largely for their followers.

The Management University of Africa (MUA) is a premier private university in Kenya that was established in September 2019 by the sponsor Kenya Institute of Management (KIM). The distinct focus of MUA is to be the centre of excellence in capacity building in management, leadership, governance and entrepreneurship. In the University's efforts to stamp its global authority, it is alive to the emerging reflections in its fields of competence in terms of producing employable graduands. This is enhanced through regular surveys like teaching effectiveness evaluations that are conducted every semester. This helps in monitoring of the learning process and implementation of the curricula in the university. Additionally, market surveys are conducted on need basis that determine the content of curricula to be developed and input for the review of curricula. As per the Commission for University Education, a guiding template with standards for academic programmes do guide the process of curriculum design, content and the delivery part of it is anchored on the University's faculty. Annually, tracer surveys are conducted to determine the employability skills acquired by graduands and their employability rate.

Learning

a) E-learning

Online education has gained considerable prominence, becoming highly sought after among students in the present era. Higher education institutions have made substantial strides in promoting virtual classrooms and learning environments (McGuinness, (2019), (Korhonen & Multisilta, 2017). The emergence of virtual classes and faculties does not imply a deliberate replacement of the conventional educational system and traditional faculties with "classrooms without walls." While traditional methods remain significant, they must evolve alongside new technologies to meet the demands of contemporary education (Qvist, et.al, 2015). This approach will continue to appeal to students who prefer learning through conventional means, fostering positive innovation within traditional faculties as well (Kakoty et.al, 2011).

The E-learning process and advancements in digital technology have broadened the accessibility of online learning beyond the constraints of physical location. This has created an environment conducive to outcome-based learning, often facilitated through the integration of new technology and tools (Yakubu et.al, 2019). The E-learning acceptance model (ELAM) outlines four factors influencing e-learning acceptance: (i) Performance expectancy, which considers beliefs about flexibility, interactivity, and usefulness; (ii) Effort expectancy, based on beliefs about convenience and efficacy; (iii) Social influence, related to subjective norms; and (iv) facilitating conditions. Numerous authors have identified key factors in adopting e-learning, measurable through the behavioral intention to use the technology (Shen et, al., 2019). Teaching strategies in online courses can be categorized as (i) Auditory learners, (ii) Visual learners, (iii) Kinaesthetic learners, and (iv) Read/write learners. According to Biggs (1996), the objective of virtual learning can be achieved by providing instructions in a specific order aligned with the desired learning outcomes for assessment and evaluation.

b) Problem-based learning

Active learning refers to instructional methods and approaches that engage students in the learning process through activities that require them to actively participate, think critically, and apply their knowledge. Instead of passively receiving information, students are actively involved in activities such as discussions, problem-solving, group work, and hands-on experiences. Active learning aims to promote deeper understanding, critical thinking skills, and the ability to apply knowledge in real-world scenarios (Bonwell & Eison 1991). The learning takes a competency-based education where learners are allowed to apply what they have learnt.

Curriculum Design

According to Syomwene (2023) a curriculum is a programme of study. The concept of curriculum design encompasses several vital attributes. For numerous educators and learners, curriculum and its design typically refer to documented criteria for educational programs, particularly those associated with specific knowledge domains. Some scholars argue that in this context, the curriculum can be seen as a response to administrative demands or quality assurance measures. Often, a curriculum is seen as a course shaped by academic interests, content, and outcomes,

crafted by the instructional staff and delivered to students (Druzhinina et al., 2018). Development of curricula includes inclusion of the revised Blooms Taxonomy and Tyler's model of curriculum development. The revised Bloom's Taxonomy, introduced in 2001 by Anderson and Krathwohl, offers a vital framework for 21st-century curriculum design, emphasizing cognitive development levels and knowledge categories. This taxonomy, featuring six cognitive levels and four knowledge levels, serves as a standard guideline for designing learner-centered higher education curricula. Instructors can leverage it to shape learning outcomes, content, teaching methods, activities, resources, and assessments, aligning with the demand for quality education and the 4th Sustainable Development Goal. Tyler's Model of Curriculum Development, presented by Tyler in 1949, follows a sequential four-step process: stating objectives, selecting learning experiences, organizing experiences, and evaluating outcomes. This classical model underscores the importance of clear objectives in guiding subsequent stages of curriculum development. Tyler's approach, emphasizing structured processes and clear objectives, significantly informs higher education curriculum design. Both the revised Bloom's Taxonomy and Tyler's Model contribute to effective curriculum design, aligning educational goals with learner-centered approaches in higher education.

Employability

Acquiring employability skills necessary for employment is imperative for thriving in today's competitive job market. These skills, encompass adaptability and competitiveness, empower workers to enhance productivity and drive profits (Aliu et al., 2021). Notable examples of such skills comprise effective communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership (Aliu et al., 2021). Proficiency in these areas is vital for collaborating effectively, navigating challenging scenarios, and assuming leadership responsibilities in the employment sector. In addition to these, job skills, defined as the capacity to transition between roles and continuously develop the necessary skills and attributes for employment (Gilbert et al., 2022), are crucial for sustained success in the job market. The Conference Board of Canada (2000) identifies employability skills as comprising three categories: (1) Fundamental skills, which form the basic foundation and encompass communication, information management, and numerical proficiency; (2) personal management skills, involving attitudes and behaviors that foster constant personal development, such as maintaining a positive attitude, being adaptable, demonstrating responsibility, and a commitment to ongoing learning, meticulous work, critical thinking, and problem-solving; and (3) teamwork skills, essential for increased workplace productivity, encompassing the ability to collaborate effectively and actively participate in group endeavors.

Fostering employability skills is pivotal in the contemporary job market as this increases the employment rate. Gilbert et al. (2022) outlines three key components for skill development that employers look for in employees: ownership, position, and process. Ownership refers to the skills, knowledge, and experience acquired by workers. Position encompasses factors like the worker's network, social standing, and the prestige of their educational institution. The career-building process and self-regulation are crucial for skill development. By concentrating on these components, continuously enhancing skills and expertise, workers can enhance their prospects in the job market and adeptly respond to the evolving demands of the modern

Problem Statement

The upsurge of interest in employability can be traced to a number of factors, including a concern that graduates are less likely to secure public-sector employment due to the massification of higher education (Sin and Neave, 2016). According to Cengage Group's 2022 Graduate Employability Report which entails 1,000 graduates who completed a degree or non-degree programme in 2021, there is confusion and lack of confidence in today's graduates that questions the value of their education and overall career readiness. Additionally, The Human Resource Forecast report of 2022 on Labour market 2030 and beyond states that institutions of higher learning need to focus operations on the following aspects; Skills mismatch thus prepare graduates to be all round, Skill needs in information and knowledge-based societies, Flexible and transferable skills, Training for experience led work and Values assigned to work.

According to MUA's 2021 Tracer survey conducted among MUA graduate employers, 75% of the respondents agreed that there are employability skills that universities need to train its students on, work etiquette, computer skills, practical oriented learning, communication skills, interpersonal skills and soft skills like attitude towards work. Additionally, a market survey conducted by the Management University of Africa in 2022 that focused on curricula review revealed that universities need to embed negotiation skills in its curricula, community-based programmes i.e. activities that directly impact and involve the community that are not necessarily academic, Tele health care and technological changes. MUA's Employers Tracer Study of 2022 clearly indicates that, industry players want universities to ensure that university curriculum is designed in tandem with societal changes. For this reason, stakeholders often chide concerning the skill mismatch between the academic programmes offered at the universities and the requirements of the labour market. The purpose of this paper therefore is to discuss the effects of learning and curriculum design on employability of universities graduates in Kenya; A case study of Management University of Africa.

Objectives

The main objective of the study is to assess the effect of learning curriculum on employability skills in private universities in Kenya.

The specific objectives of the study are to

- i. To find out the effect of teaching methodology on employability of university graduates
- ii. To examine the effect of curriculum design on employability of university graduates

Research Questions

- i. How does teaching methodology affect employability of university graduates
- ii. How does adaptability of curricula affect employability of university graduates

Justification of the study

This study will benefit the faculty members developing curricula in universities as it will provide the nexus between learning methodologies, curriculum design, and the development of employability skills in the curriculum and the job market needs. Findings from the study will contribute valuable information for the formulation and enhancement of educational policies in Kenya. Understanding the link between learning, curriculum, and employability skills can aid

policymakers in developing strategies that foster a more employable and skilled workforce. By examining the learning approaches, curriculum content, and the development of employability skills, the study aims to contribute practical recommendations in Improving the employability of graduates through embedding the skills that will be nurtured among students as they study and by the time they graduate, universities will ensure that graduates possess skills and knowledge demanded by various industries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

This study is supported by two theories; Functional Context Theory and Stimulus Response Learning Theory.

Functional Context Theory

The research is grounded in Thomas Sticht's functional context theory (1975), which posits that the acquisition of new information is facilitated when learners can connect it to their existing knowledge and transform old knowledge into new insights. The theory emphasizes the importance of using materials relevant to learners' future applications, promoting the transfer of knowledge from the classroom to real-world scenarios. Functional context theory is underpinned by four key principles. Firstly, instructional methods should align with lesson goals and assist students in leveraging their prior knowledge. Secondly, educators should employ tools and materials that align with the content being taught. Thirdly, literacy improvement can be achieved through a combination of robust content knowledge, honed information processing skills, and well-designed learning tools. Finally, a novel approach to learning assessment should incorporate contextual measurement. Consequently, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are urged to create a learning environment closely resembling industrial settings to ensure that students acquire skills directly applicable to industry needs. HEIs teachers play a crucial role by employing teaching methods and tools that enhance students' skill acquisition, enabling them to effectively function in the professional work environment.

Stimulus Response Learning Theory

Stimulus-response learning theory, formulated by psychologist Edward Thorndike in 1898, is a behaviorist perspective that focuses on the association between stimuli and responses, emphasizing the role of reinforcement in shaping behavior. Thorndike's influential work laid the foundation for the understanding of learning processes. His Law of Effect, proposed in 1898, posits that behaviors followed by positive consequences are more likely to be repeated, while those followed by negative consequences are less likely to be repeated. Thorndike (1911) conducted numerous experiments with animals, particularly cats, to study the process of learning through trial and error. One of his notable experiments involved placing a cat in a puzzle box, where the cat had to perform specific actions to escape and obtain a reward. Through repetition and the association of specific behaviors with desirable outcomes, Thorndike observed that the cats learned to escape more efficiently over time. Thorndike's (1913) stimulus-response theory contributed significantly to the development of behaviorism. While the theory has evolved over the years, Thorndike's emphasis on the importance of reinforcement and the association between stimuli and responses remains a fundamental aspect of learning theories. Thorndike's Stimulus-Response learning theory provides

a theoretical framework that supports the development of effective learning environments, curriculum design, and strategies to enhance employability skills in the context of private universities in Kenya. Applying these principles can contribute to a more holistic and practical education that prepares students for success in their future careers.

Empirical Literature Review

A study was conducted by Mwebia and Kyilu (2016), on the influence of curriculum design on employability of Kenyan graduates; public universities perspective indicates that work experience is deemed a crucial factor in the job market, with internships being particularly beneficial for graduates seeking their initial employment opportunities. Additionally, the study underscored the significance of industrial attachments for lecturers, as they were perceived to enhance their understanding of industry practices. The conclusion drawn from the study emphasizes the need for a purposeful design of experiential learning approaches, specifically centered on open-ended authentic projects and collaboratively negotiated between university and industry stakeholders.

According to a study conducted by Rowe and Zegwaard (2017) on developing graduate employability skills and attributes; Curriculum enhancement through work-integrated learning. The study explored the role of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) in enhancing graduate employability. It recognized the evolving nature of employability, encompassing diverse skills and attributes. The research emphasized on the need to effectively integrate WIL experiences into the curriculum, supported by appropriate pedagogical strategies and quality assessment. However, it acknowledged resource implications, including potential impacts on staff workload. Additionally, Jackson (2015), indicated that work-integrated learning (WIL) is widely considered instrumental in equipping new graduates with the required employability skills to function effectively in the work environment.

Ngulube's (2020) study revealed a mismatch between the skills provided in the undergraduate economics program and those demanded by the industry. The study guides covered only 29.4% of the essential skills in the job market. Given that employers now consider more than just academic qualifications, higher education institutions are urged to ensure the production of employable graduates. The study recommends aligning employability skills with market needs and adjusting curricula and pedagogy to enhance graduate skill outcomes.

A study was conducted by Ndeda, Wambiya and Getui (2020) on effectiveness of transformative learning experiences on employability of Bachelor of Technology programme graduates of Technical University of Kenya. The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach. Data was collected through a questionnaire and interview guide. The Perspective Transformation Index (PT-Index) revealed that 67.3% of graduates experienced transformative learning, with 71% attributing it to B.Tech program activities. Mentoring (85%), group projects (58%), and class presentations (46%) were identified as key transformative elements. Findings highlighted the positive impact on employability, influencing curriculum design and training processes in higher education. The study recommends incorporating transformative learning to enhance B.Tech graduates' employability.

Table 1: Summary of Research Gaps

Author	Research Area	Findings	Research Gap	
Mwebia and Kyilu (2016)	Influence of curriculum design on employability of Kenyan graduates	Internships being particularly beneficial for graduates seeking their initial employment opportunities	The study aimed to find out the influence of curriculum design on employability of kenyan graduates in public universities	This study aims to assess the effect of curriculum, learning on employability skills of graduates
Rowe and Zegwaard (2017)	Developing graduate employability skills and attributes; Curriculum enhancement through work-integrated learning(WIL)	Underscores the importance of WIL in promoting graduate employability, advocating for strategic integration and ongoing research	The study was done in New Zealand	This study will be done in Kenya
Ngulube's (2020)	Undergraduate economics curriculum and employability skills in south africa	The study showed that there is mismatch between the curriculum taught and the market needs	The study was done in South Africa The study only based the research on curriculum and employability skills	the study is done in Kenya The study is based on curriculum design, learning and employability skills
Ndeda, Wambiya and Getui (2020)	Effectiveness of transformative learning experiences on employability of Bachelor of Technology programme graduates of Technical University of Kenya.	Findings highlighted the positive impact on employability, influencing curriculum design and training processes in higher education.	The study adopted sequential explanatory mixed-method approach	The study will use a descriptive research design



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable is employability and the independent variables are learning and curriculum design.

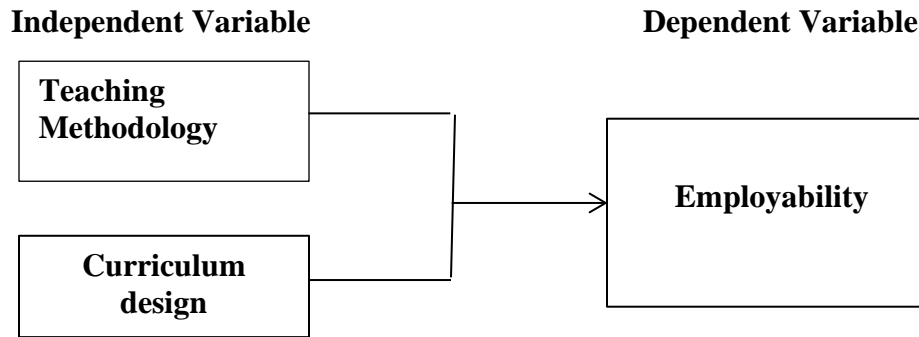


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source (Researcher, 2024)

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research design utilizing content analysis as the primary method of inquiry. This approach is suitable for systematically analyzing and interpreting textual data to identify patterns, themes, and insights that align with the research objectives. The study analyzed data from secondary data sources derived from recent, teaching effectiveness survey report, Market surveys report and Tracer survey reports was done. The data comprises pre-existing reports and raw survey results stored in the MUA's Quality Assurance Office's database. No primary data collection was conducted; instead, existing data from 2022 -2024 surveys was reviewed and categorized for analysis. Additionally, online journals and magazines from the global and local authors related to the topic of the study were used. This method was easy to get current details from various authors to support the study. The limitations of the research include the potential specificity of findings to the Management University of Africa. The expected outcomes of the study include valuable insights into how curriculum design influences the development of employability skills among students in private universities in Kenya, contributing to a broader understanding of the subject.

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, analyzing data from market surveys, teaching effectiveness evaluations, and alumni tracer surveys. The focus is on key aspects influencing employability, including teaching methodology and curriculum design.

The Effect of Teaching Methodology on Employability of University Graduates

From the analysis of the surveys, it is evident that the teaching methodology has an effect on graduate employability. Specifically, at MUA teaching methodology was perceived to have

influenced students' employability positively. The survey results emphasize the importance of diverse teaching methodologies in fostering employability. Over 60% of respondents rated skills such as presentation, report writing, and interpersonal communication as very useful. These findings highlight the pivotal role of soft skills training and leadership-focused approaches in preparing students for the workplace. Additionally, social engagement and community involvement were rated Very Useful by 52.8% of respondents, indicating that practical, socially oriented teaching methods enhance critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for professional and personal growth.

The survey findings highlight the value of various teaching methodology in enhancing employability. Industrial or practical attachment was deemed Very Useful by 54.92% of respondents, emphasizing the critical role of hands-on learning experiences in equipping individuals with practical skills essential for the job market. Career guidance services received mixed ratings, with 41.67% of respondents finding them Very Useful and 34.17% considering them Moderately Useful. This suggests that while career guidance contributes to employability, its impact may vary depending on individual needs or circumstances. Notably, work ethics stood out as a key factor for career success, with 68.50% of respondents rating it as Very Useful, underscoring the importance of ethical behavior in fostering professional growth and workplace effectiveness.

To examine the Effect of Curriculum Design on Employability of University graduates

Curriculum components such as leadership and ICT skills play a significant role in employability, though their impact varies. Leadership skills were rated as Very Useful by 71.88% of respondents, underscoring their importance in preparing students for professional growth and responsibility. Conversely, ICT skills received mixed feedback, reflected in a weighted average of 2.02, suggesting the need for curriculum updates to align with evolving technological demands. Additionally, work ethics emerged as a critical area, with 68.50% of respondents rating work ethics as Very Useful, highlighting the value of curriculum elements that promote professional integrity and development.

The impact of an MUA degree on career progression is evident from the survey findings. A significant majority of respondents (57.6% agreed and 27.1% strongly agreed) believe their MUA degree has opened opportunities in their chosen career paths. This is further supported by 62.7% agreeing that the degree has positively advanced their careers. MUA's influence on professional growth is also noteworthy, with 50% agreeing and 17.2% strongly agreeing that the university has facilitated career growth, particularly through its emphasis on leadership development and its strong reputation in management and leadership education. Furthermore, an overwhelming 96.6% of respondents acknowledged that their MUA degree enhanced their technical and managerial knowledge, skills that are essential for career advancement and success.

From the market survey, most of the respondents to aimed to improve their knowledge and skills, progress in their careers, sought industry recognition and credibility explore new networking opportunities, and enhance their personal development from studying the programmes. The specific knowledge and skills to be gained by the respondents included; Communication skills

proficiency, Research skills ability, Adaptability and continuous learning ability -, Time management and organization skills, Collaboration and teamwork skills, and Ethical and professional conduct

The respondents expressed a clear preference for Open Distance and e-Learning (ODEL) as their preferred mode of study. This choice reflects the growing demand for flexible and accessible learning options that accommodate diverse schedules and individual needs. ODeL allows students to balance their education with work and personal commitments while leveraging technology for a more self-paced and interactive learning experience. This preference underscores the importance of integrating robust e-learning platforms and support systems to enhance the overall learning experience and accessibility for students.

Respondents expressed strong confidence that the programs offered would significantly enhance their respective industries and fields. This belief highlights the relevance of the curriculum in addressing industry-specific needs and equipping learners with practical skills and knowledge. The programs were seen as instrumental in fostering innovation, improving professional standards, and contributing to the overall growth and development of various sectors. This feedback underscores the importance of continuously aligning academic offerings with industry demands to ensure impactful and career-oriented education.

Key recommendations for the programmes emphasize the integration of essential skills to better prepare students for the evolving demands of the workforce. These include negotiation skills to enhance conflict resolution and deal-making abilities, digital literacy to navigate and leverage modern technology, and ethics to uphold professional integrity. Additionally, incorporating entrepreneurship skills will foster innovation and self-reliance, while communication skills will improve interpersonal effectiveness and teamwork. Lastly, a greater emphasis on practical skills will ensure students are equipped with hands-on experience and industry-relevant competencies, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

Table 2: Summary of findings

Aspect	Very Useful	Moderately Useful	Neutral	Slightly Useful	Not Useful At All	Total	Weighted Average
Industrial/Practical Attachment	54.92%	27.05%	15.57%	0.82%	1.64%		
	67	33	19	1	2	122	1.67
Career Guidance Services	41.67%	34.17%	20.83%	2.50%	0.83%		
	50	41	25	3	1	120	1.87
Presentation Skills	66.14%	26.77%	4.72%	1.57%	0.79%		
	84	34	6	2	1	127	1.44
Report Writing Skills	57.81%	35.16%	5.47%	0.78%	0.78%		
	74	45	7	1	1	128	1.52
Interpersonal Communication Skills/Coaching/Debating	61.72%	29.69%	6.25%	0.78%	1.56%		
	79	38	8	1	2	128	1.51



Aspect	Very Useful	Moderately Useful	Neutral	Slightly Useful	Not Useful At All	Total	Weighted Average
Work Ethics	68.50%	26.77%	3.94%	0.00%	0.79%		
	87	34	5	0	1	127	1.38
Leadership skills	71.88%	25.78%	1.56%	0.00%	0.78%		
	92	33	2	0	1	128	1.32
Acquisition of ICT skills	34.96%	37.40%	21.95%	2.44%	3.25%		
	43	46	27	3	4	123	2.02
Social Engagement in the Community and Society	52.80%	37.60%	7.20%	2.40%	0.00%		
	66	47	9	3	0	125	1.59

DISCUSSIONS

There is a link between teaching methodology and employability in terms of the skills that will be acquired by the learners in classroom and being able to apply the knowledge gained in class room in the employability world. Tangible effects of curriculum design often require embedment of the skills into the curriculum, exposure with industry for a hands-on experience on employability and ensuring that learners train to be employers and not just employees. High-level improved e-learning techniques is the way to go as students in the employment sector can sharpen their skills while at the same term increasing their competitiveness in employment. Comprehensive and complementary approaches to teaching is an eye opener to students who graduate with an open mind of being job creators with relevant skills that will eventually reduce the unemployment rate in Kenya.

The findings of this study align with previous research, highlighting the importance of teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and transformative learning experiences in enhancing graduate employability. At the Management University of Africa (MUA), teaching methodologies that emphasize soft skills, hands-on learning, and leadership-focused approaches were perceived to significantly influence students' employability. This is consistent with studies by Rowe and Zegwaard (2017) and Jackson (2015), which underscored the critical role of work-integrated learning (WIL) in equipping graduates with workplace-ready skills through practical experiences supported by well-designed pedagogy and assessments. Similarly, the emphasis on industrial or practical attachments at MUA reflects Mwebia and Kyilu's (2016) findings that internships and experiential learning are crucial in preparing students for the job market, benefiting both graduates and lecturers by bridging the gap between academic and industry practices.

The curriculum design at MUA, focusing on leadership and ICT skills, also finds resonance in past studies. Leadership skills, rated highly by respondents, align with Ndeda, Wambiya, and Getui's (2020) study, where transformative elements such as mentoring and group projects enhanced employability. However, the mixed feedback on ICT skills, with a weighted average of 2.02, highlights a gap in aligning the curriculum with the rapid advancements in technology. This aligns with Ngulube's (2020) observation of a mismatch between academic programs and market demands, calling for curriculum adjustments to ensure graduates possess relevant technical

competencies.

The study also noted that 96.6% of respondents acknowledged the enhancement of technical and managerial knowledge through MUA programs. This aligns with the transformative learning experiences highlighted in the study by Ndeda et al. (2020), where 67.3% of graduates attributed their employability to transformative program activities. Similarly, the positive impact of mentoring, group projects, and class presentations at MUA reflects findings from the same study, emphasizing the need to incorporate such elements into curriculum design to foster employability. Open Distance and e-Learning (ODEL) emerged as the preferred mode of study, reflecting global trends toward flexible and accessible education. This preference supports Rowe and Zegwaard's (2017) emphasis on the evolving nature of employability, which requires diverse learning modes to cater to individual needs and modern workplace expectations.

The recommendations from this study, including the integration of negotiation skills, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship, echo the findings of Ngulube (2020), which advocate aligning employability skills with market needs. Additionally, the focus on ethics and practical skills parallels Jackson's (2015) emphasis on the role of WIL in developing workplace competencies, ensuring graduates transition smoothly into their professional roles. In conclusion, the findings emphasize the necessity of a holistic approach to teaching methodologies and curriculum design, incorporating work-integrated and transformative learning strategies. Aligning these elements with industry demands and incorporating feedback from graduates ensures that programs remain relevant and effective in enhancing employability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the crucial role of teaching methodologies in enhancing graduate employability. Respondents rated soft skills training, such as presentation skills, report writing, and interpersonal communication, as highly valuable. Additionally, the focus on leadership and ethical training within the curriculum was seen as key in preparing students for professional growth. This aligns with the broader educational trend that emphasizes the importance of diverse, practical teaching strategies to equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce.

The second key finding relates to curriculum design. Leadership skills were identified as highly beneficial, with a significant majority of respondents deeming them essential for career progression. However, the mixed feedback on ICT skills suggests that while these are important, the curriculum must be continuously updated to meet the rapidly changing technological landscape. Moreover, work ethics emerged as a critical component, with many students highlighting the value of ethical training in their professional development, reinforcing the importance of a well-rounded curriculum that prepares students for real-world challenges.

Additionally, the study emphasizes the growing preference for flexible learning modes, particularly Open Distance and e-Learning (ODEL), which cater to students' diverse needs. The integration of work-integrated learning (WIL), mentoring, and group projects further enhances employability by providing students with transformative learning experiences. These findings suggest that aligning academic programs with industry demands, integrating both theoretical and practical learning experiences, and offering flexible study options are essential for producing graduates who are not only technically proficient but also adaptable and ready to succeed in the global job market. Finally, the unemployment rate within university graduates will reduce when Universities will in calculate in its students the mindset of self-employment in addition to formal employment. Learners need to embrace the employability skills that will be delivered top them through the Curriculum. Teaching methodologies used in the classroom setting should gear the minds of the learners in the employment world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that faculty members embed employability skills directly into the curriculum to ensure that students are adequately prepared for the workforce. These skills should not only focus on technical expertise but also emphasize critical soft skills such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and ethics. Universities should streamline and integrate diverse teaching methodologies that promote practical learning, ensuring that students gain the hands-on experience and skills necessary for employment. In particular, blending theoretical learning with practical exposure will better equip graduates to meet the demands of their future careers.

Furthermore, universities must strengthen their collaboration with industries to facilitate greater exposure to the employment world. This connection will allow students to gain valuable insights into industry practices, trends, and expectations, thus enhancing their employability. A robust link between academia and industry can be established through internships, work-integrated learning (WIL) programs, mentorship opportunities, and guest lectures. These initiatives will help bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application, increasing students' preparedness for the workforce. Another key recommendation is the revision of university curricula to adopt a competency-based learning approach. Competency-based education focuses on ensuring that students acquire the specific skills and knowledge required for professional success. This approach will better align academic programs with the evolving needs of the job market and enhance graduates' ability to demonstrate their qualifications and competence to prospective employers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

For further studies, it would be valuable to explore the long-term impact of embedding employability skills in the curriculum on graduates' career success. Research could examine the relationship between curriculum changes and the career progression of alumni, including metrics such as job placement, career advancement, and professional satisfaction. Additionally, a comparative study of universities that have integrated competency-based learning versus those with traditional curricula could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing employability.

Further studies should also explore the role of digital learning platforms, such as Open Distance and e-Learning (ODEL), in shaping employability outcomes. Research could examine how these flexible learning models compare to traditional face-to-face education in terms of skill acquisition, student engagement, and preparedness for the job market. Furthermore, studies should consider the impact of closer collaboration between universities and industries, assessing how these partnerships influence the quality of the workforce and the relevance of educational programs to industry needs.

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