

Marketing Higher Institutions of Learning in Nigeria: A Determinant of “Quality” Graduates

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Abstract: *The starting point of marketing is not selling a product or service but it is the identification of the needs and wants of the ultimate consumers and producing quality products or services to meet the needs and wants. Marketing is critical to the survival and success of educational institutions, firms, individuals and a nation in general, because marketing holds premises to creation, development, establishment and sustenance of value. A company or an institution of learning can be extremely efficient and yet be remarkably unsuccessful because it is not producing what customers want to buy. Through production and marketing, business organizations and institutions create utility. Many higher institutions of learning in developing countries are unable to produce “quality” graduates who are potential managers and leaders, responsible for the formulation and management of organization and national strategies and policies. This research article focuses on the input resources, the transformation process and the output resources as seen in a business organization production system, relating it to learning process in higher institution of learning in Nigeria, as a determinant of “quality” graduates. Quality input resources gives quality output resources. Data relating to lecturer competencies, library capacity, laboratory science capacity, leadership consciousness and learning curriculum were elicited from three universities and three polytechnics from south-south, south-west and south-east geo-political zones of the country, using the data as predictive variables in producing quality potential managers and leaders who can move an economy forward with little or no inconsistent and conflicting policies. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the effects of these variables (input resources) on quality potential managers and leaders (output resources). The result shows that lack of lecturer competencies and laboratory science capacity are the main variables that negatively affect quality of our graduates.*

Keywords: *marketing, educational institutions, quality graduates, input resources, customer satisfaction, potential leaders*

1. Introduction

A service has been defined as an intangible benefit provided to individuals, business, government establishments and other organizations through the performance of a variety of activities or the provision of physical facilities, products or activity for other use (Inegbenebor 2001). The service industry in Nigeria is important as in other economics, especially in terms of the numbers of persons employed in service industries and the contribution of the services to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Agbonifor, et al, 1998). Service industry include the government sector, with its courts, employment services, hospitals, loan agencies, military services, police, fire department, post office, regulatory agencies and schools.

A company or an institution of learning can be extremely efficient and yet be remarkably unsuccessful because it is not producing what customers want to buy (Jobber, 2004). The task of satisfying the customers with good quality products and services is not a sole responsibility of the marketing department alone (Donnelly, 2004).

There must be total quality management in which all the department cooperate and collaborate, to satisfy the customers with quality products and services.

As higher institution of learning emerges, competitive pressures mount, value conscious students and family appears harder to please. Parents who know the value of education are selective in the institution they wish to send their children. Consequently, school administrators have come to know that beyond establishing these schools or rendering educational services, the educational institution survival is really a function of quality. This emphasizes the fact that the economic growth of a nation depends on its ability to design effective marketing system.

Employers of labor in both private and public sectors relies mostly on higher institution of learning to transform “quality” graduates who can combine scarce resources to achieve organization objectives and goals, formulate strategies and policies for economic growth and development.

The big question that begs for answer are, are there quality potential managers and leaders from our higher institution of learning in this contemporary time? What are the input resources and the transformation process in the higher institution of learning? What are the implications of low quality graduates to Nigeria economic growth? What marketing strategies are appropriate in alleviating the problem of graduates without knowledge and skills in their profession?

To find answers to these questions, informed this research article.

2. Statement of the Problem

Customers provide payment to an organization in return of the delivery of goods/services and therefore form a focal point for an organization marketing activities.

According to Adrian (2000) colleges must not only market themselves to prospective students, but also to their parents, careers counselors and local employers. This category of people forms the range of customers to higher institution of learning. The satisfaction of the customers must be central to the producer and services provider. There has been a realization in the modern business world, that business undertaking should be customers oriented and marketers should pay close attention to the customer’s needs and wants in order to achieve a successful business relationship.

Considerable innovation and ingenuity are needed to make high quality service available to consumers in order to meet their expectations and also to serve as a competitive advantage over rivals.

Service quality and customers satisfaction are of growing concern to business organization throughout the world. However, there are cases where there are gap between service quality specification and actual services quality delivery.

In recent times, many graduates coming out of most of the higher institutions of learning cannot fit into Nigeria labor market, both in private and public sector. This challenge is present in all the professions (Ezenylimba, 2009). The quality of finished product is a function of the input resources in relation to men, materials, method and money. Quality is the totality of feature and characteristics of a product or services that satisfy stated or implied needs. Quality is conformity to requirement, and not goodness. Quality is freedom from defects. It is the overall characteristics of a product that allows it to perform as expected in satisfying customers stated or implied needs.

If the quality of our graduates cannot fit into the labor market in relation to intelligence, moral values, creativity, innovativeness, entrepreneurship development, then the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would have no competitive and comparative advantage.

Gbariu (2006) observed that some people in Nigeria today hold educational certificates to prove that they are educated or to contest for political positions. Denga (1984) states that it is a mistake to use certificate as a proof of education. Today because of undue emphasis attached to paper qualifications in Nigeria, students graduates

from school without acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, norms, values and other attributes expected of them.

3. Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of this research article are to determine the effects of Nigeria graduates from higher institution of learning on economic growth and development.

Specifically, the objectives of the study include the following:

1. To examine the impact of input resources in Nigeria education sector on the quality of the graduates (output resources).
2. To examine the control mechanism in higher institution of learning when defects products (low quality graduates) are been produced.
3. To examine the implication of Nigeria education system on economic and technological development.
4. To examine marketing strategies that produces quality products (potential managers and leaders).

4. Literature Review

4.1 The Input/Output Model In A Production System

Banga (2008) defined production as the transformation or the conversion of input resources into finished goods and services. According to him, it is an organized activity of converting raw materials into useful products by organized utilization of natural resources of men, money, material and machines. Production is a process developed to transform a set of input like men, materials, money, machinery and energy into a specified set of output like finished products and services in desired quality and quantity in order to achieve the objectives and goals of the organization.

According to Banjoko (1989), the quality of product or services depends largely on the input resources. Lyson (1999) states that quality raw materials gives quality finished goods/products. In a manufacturing business organization, the input and output resources relationship in a production system can be depicted as shown below.

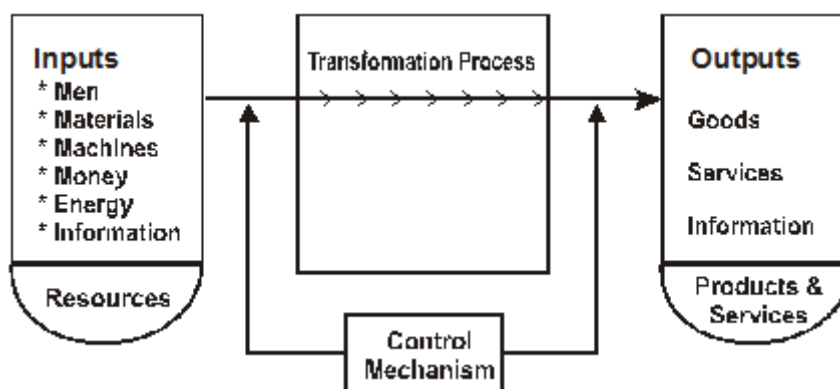


Fig. 1

Source: Banjoko (1989) Production Management

In the production system, the four basic elements of a production system are the input which consist men, materials, money, energy and information. The experience and educational level of the men would determine the extent to which they can organize the other factors of production. The quality of the raw materials would determine the quality of the finished products. The amount of money invested in buying quality raw materials, pay labor, buy new machines also determine the quality of the finished products. The level of power supply (energy) also affects the quality and quantity of finished products. The level of data and information gathered

through market research also help to produce quality products that are preferred by consumers to that of competitions.

The second stage is the transformation process where the input resources are converted or processed or transformed. During this process there can be a value chain to the transformation process. The completion of the transformation process gives rise to a finished product which emerged for sale or usage. There is also the control mechanism which regulates the production system and hence helps to detect malfunctioning lapses in any time. Through this mechanism, the input resources are checked whether they are of the right quality and standard before they are released into the transformation stage. More so, if there are defects in the products, the control mechanism is also used to check the root cause, to determine whether is from the input resources or from the transformation process.

4.2 The Input/Output Model In Educational System.

Relating the production model as in figure 1 above, to tertiary institution of learning, some input resources, learning process (transformation or conversion) and consequently finished products (graduates) can also be produced as depicted below, in the educational system.

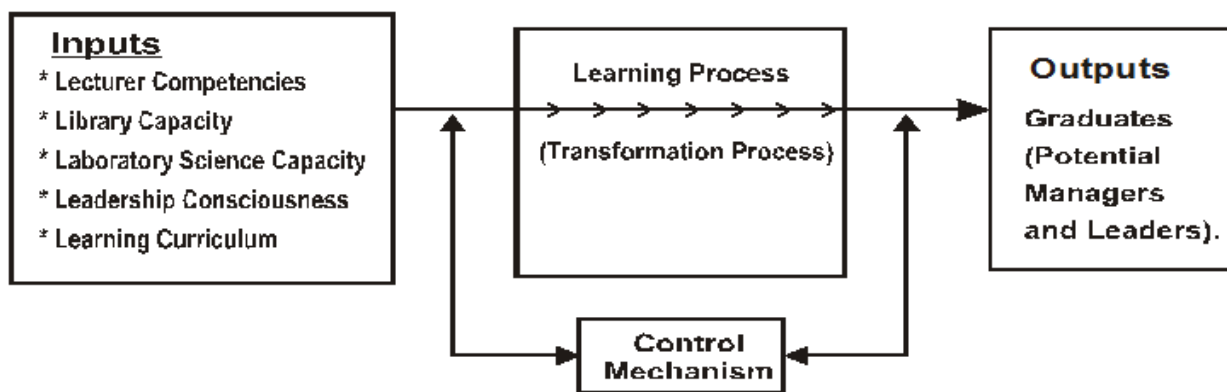


Fig. 2

4.3 Input / Output Model of Quality Graduates.

Source: Researcher Model, 2016

A quality system is defined as the organization structure, responsibilities, procedure, process, and resources for implementing quality management (Lyson 1999). A quality system typically applies to, and interacts with all activities pertinent to the quality of a product or service.

Quality control is concerned with defect detection and correction, and relatives to such activities as determining where, how and at what intervals inspection should take place (Dobler 1996). The input variables in the Model above that determine the quality of graduates carries the following connotations.

5. Lecturer Competencies:

Competencies are always the product of experience, representing an accumulation of learning over time and the building over time of real proficiencies (Strickland and Thompson 2004). Competencies have to be consciously built and developed, they don't just happen. A company competency originates with deliberate efforts to develop the organizational ability to do something. Such efforts entails selecting people with the requisite knowledge and skills, upgrading or expanding individual abilities as needed. Examples of competencies are skills in merchandizing and product display, the ability to create attractive and easy to use website, expertise in a specific technology, skills in working with customers on new applications and uses of the products, the ability to impact knowledge to students.

6. Library Capacity

A library is an institution that requires, organizes, preserves and makes available the recorded knowledge of man to the users. It is a collection of books and non books materials organized and kept for reading, studying and consultation. It is a repository of knowledge. It is a collection of books and related materials housed, organized and interpreted to meet the broad and varying needs of people for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment.

With technological advancement E-libraries are been used for e-learning. This gives unlimited access to information and data for research.

Libraries provide reliable information, stimulate educated advancement, facilitate research work and preserve the recorded knowledge of man.

7. Laboratory Science Capacity

A laboratory is a room or a place or compartment in a building where teaching of science, testing and scientific research are carried out using various scientific methods, equipments and instruments.

The laboratory is the foundation of all scientific and technological development (Palmer, et al 2015). Laboratories are classified according to the nature of work carried out which include the following- Chemical laboratories, Biological, Geological, Physical, Biochemical, Microbiological and Food Science Laboratories (Palmer, et al 2015).

Modern scientific laboratory helps in evaluating the quality of underground and surface water for domestic, industrial and agricultural use; for the quality control of raw and finished industrial products; evaluates nutrients deficiency and abundance in soil; to determine the component or chemical/physical composition of soil for construction of roads, bridges and buildings.

8. Leadership Consciousness

Leadership is about service, sacrifice and self-denial. Leadership is the ability to influence others to follow. The leadership style in most higher institution of learning have lead to student unrest, workers and academic staff strike, leading to long period of non academic exercise.

9. Learning Curriculum

Curriculum is the educational programme which is composed of subject to be learned, activities which provide learning experiences for students and guidance services which take care of students personal needs and problems. It is a programme used by the school as a means of achieving its objectives. The planning of learning opportunities intended to bring about certain changes in students and the assessments of the extent to which this changes have taken place is what is meant by curriculum development. As a lecturer, this means that you need to know very clearly what you want to achieve in the students.

Curriculum development involves selection of objectives, choosing of content, choosing instructional strategies and selection of materials and resources. These five variables or input resources among others determine the quality of potential managers and leaders in the society. The impartation of knowledge or learning process is the transformation or conversion process.

It is important to note that the control mechanism here, has to do with a graduate with low competencies being identified as a defect product and being sent for retraining or relieve of his positions as a defect product that cannot be accepted for sale.

10. The Role of Tertiary Institutions of Learning to Nigerian Economy

Ezenyilimba (2009) opined that tertiary institution of learning contribute to Nigerian Economy among others in the following ways:

- * **Knowledge Acquisition:** Pursuit, Promotion and Dissemination of knowledge.
- * **Research:** Priority must be given to research into local problems such as rural health, problems of poverty in its varying contexts, the conflicts of cultures in multi-ethnic societies.

- * **Provision of Intellectual Leadership:** This involves knowledge for planning and executing meaningful programs of economic and social development. In this process, the academic must set the highest standard of intellectual honesty, simplify his language, and graduate must see himself as the servant not master of the people. Leadership is about service, sacrifice and self-denial.
- * **Man Power Development:** Many engineering, science and even some business graduates for examples, remain notoriously deficient of professional and practical skills. At the high level at which the university claims to operate, it has sometimes been seriously ineffective. In addition, the university's contribution to the development of middle level manpower has been marginal.
- * **Promoting Social and Economic Modernization:** Most African countries including Nigeria are characterized by multiplicity of ethnic groups and low levels of economic organization. They are plagued into communal clashes- herdsmen and farmers, Christians and Moslems. It has therefore become difficult for democratic governments and institutions to thrive.

The academic communities in Nigerian universities, by virtue of their higher intellectual development and wider horizons, have both the capacity and the opportunity to set examples in arresting and solving these problems.

- * **Promoting Inter-Continental Unity and International Understanding:** While a university or polytechnic tends to be essentially a national or sometimes even a local institution, the frontiers of knowledge are boundless.

The truly modern Nigerian University must, therefore accept a responsibility to pursue research, disseminate knowledge, and take all other necessary action which will emancipate the Nigerian country from the prevailing shackles of ignorance. (Ezenyilimba, 2009).

11. Organization Approach to Knowledge Acquisition:

Organization approach to 'knowledge acquisition involves learning and training. Learning is the process by which a person acquires new knowledge, skills and capabilities. Training is the use of systematic and planned instruction and development activities to promote learning. The objective of an organization in embarking on learning and training programmes is to ensure that skilled, knowledgeable and competent people are available to achieve competitive advantage.

There must be a positive or conducive learning environment if the objective is to be achieved. The existence of such environment depends on the active encouragement and support of top management. Line management must also have the belief that learning and development activities pay off. Moreso, the workforce should be generally motivated to learn.

Generative learning involves creating and innovation, going beyond just adapting to change to being ahead of and anticipating change. Generative learning is an indispensable part of learning organization. A learning organization is an organization where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expensive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together (Cole, 2004). For the mark of an organization that is really committed to learning is the openness of its employees to the learning opportunities that occur daily in their work environment. Learning in this context, means that all levels and trades of staff are developing their capacity to acquire new skills and insights into the way their duties must be fulfilled. In knowledge management, a learning organization must be conscious of four key elements in terms of what managers need to know or be able to do (Cole 2004:220).

- *. Managerial knowledge - What the manager needs to know about the organization, the job, the procedures involved etc.
- *. Managerial skills -What problem- solving, social and other skills the manager needs to be able to practice.
- *. Managerial attitudes - What the manager is required to accept in terms of coping with stress, dealing with clients.
- *. Managerial style - The expectations that people have concerning the way the manager exercises leadership.

12. Methodology

Data for this research article was collected using questionnaire survey. A sample size of 140 lecturers from three polytechnics and three universities were used, of which one polytechnic and one university are private institutions. A descriptive statistics was used to determine the variables that affect the quality of graduates from higher institutions of learning who are potentials leaders and managers. Out of the 140 questionnaire only 95 were found useful for the research. A 5 point likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) was adopted.

13. Decision Rule For Descriptive Analysis

If mean <2.5, the respondent agree

If mean >2.5 the respondent do not agree.

TABLE I

S/N	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Lecturer Competencies		
	i) The least qualification of our lectures is master's degrees.	3.2	1.0
	ii) There is constant training for our lecturers.	2.8	1.1
	iii) PhD holders in our university/polytechnic are many.	2.57	0.86
	iv) Research is encouraged by giving government grants to lecturers.	3.22	1.90
	v) There is conducive teaching environment for our lecturers.	1.9	0.8
	Mean =	2.74	
2.	Library Capacity		
	i) There is an e-library in my polytechnic/university.	1.5	0.8
	ii) The school library is well equipped.	3.22	1.90
	iii) No qualified librarian in my polytechnic/university	2.39	1.76
	iv) The polytechnic/university is not opened to students beyond 4pm	1.28	0.45
	v) Textbooks in the polytechnic/university are outdated.	2.57	0.86
	Mean =	2.19	
3	Laboratory Science Capacity		
	i) Our science laboratories are well stocked with chemicals and equipment.	3.2	1.0
	ii) Qualified technologists are available to make use of the laboratories.	2.57	0.86
	iii) There is no science laboratory in our institution we use other school facilities occasionally.	2.8	1.1
	iv) Science laboratory are opened during only accreditation.	1.5	0.8
	Mean=	2.5	
4.	Leadership Consciousness		
	i) The Rector/vice chancellor of my school is autocratic	1.28	0.45
	ii) Lecturers are not motivated with on the job training	1.86	0.76
	iii) Lecturers approves for seminar and conferences in my institution is selective	1.22	0.42
	iv) The rector/vice chancellor of my institutional is liberal.	3.22	1.90
	Mean=	1.89	
5.	Learning Curriculum		
	i) The institution curriculum is current.	2.57	0.86
	ii) The curriculum is for only social and management science.	1.5	0.8
	iii) The curriculum is in line with that of the Nigerian University Commission National Board for Technical Education.	1.8	0.8
	Mean=	1.95	

14. Discussions of Findings of Descriptive Analysis

Based on the decision rule earlier stated, a 'mean' less than 2.50, shows that the respondent agreed that such variables influenced the 'quality' of graduates from our universities/polytechnics. Consequently the result of each of the five variables stands as follows:

Lecturers Competencies (2.74>2.50)

This analysis shows that the knowledge, skills and qualification of lecturers in most of our higher institutions of learning has negatively affected the quality of the graduates who are potential managers and leaders who are to contribute to the growth and development of the Nigerian Economy. There are few PhD holders and training for the lectures is not constant.

Library Capacity (2.19<2.50)

Generally, this analysis shows that, library capacity in Nigerian higher institution of learning has not affected our graduates negatively. However, many of the library are not well equipped (3.22>2.50), some of the books are out dated (2.57>2.50).

Laboratory Science Capacity (2.5 = 2.5)

Science laboratory capacity has negatively affected the quality of graduates (2.5=2.5). The laboratories are not well stocked (3.2>2.5), there are no qualified technologists to use the laboratories (2.5>2.5). In some school, they make use of facilities from other institutions (2.8>2.5).

Leadership Consciousness (1.89<2.50)

Generally, the leadership style has not negatively affected the quality of the graduates.

Learning Curriculum (1.95<2.50)

This has not also affected negatively the quality of the Nigerian graduates. However, in some schools the curriculum are not current (2.57>2.50).

15. Summary and Conclusion

Knowledge management's involves knowledge acquisition, creation, refinement, storage, transfer, sharing and utilization. Knowledge is power and power is an important fact of organization and economy.

A man cannot give what he does not have. As the foundation of industrialized economics has shifted from natural resources to intellectual assets, executives have been compelled to examine the knowledge underlying their business and how the knowledge is used for exceptional performance.

This knowledge assists potentials manager to forecast and plan, to organize, to command, to co-ordinate and to control. In recent years, there has been an emphasis on examining what managers and leaders actually do in practice acquired from the higher institutions of learning.

The performance of most managers and leaders in practice has called for a review of knowledge acquired from institutions of learning in Nigerian higher institutions of learning.

Lecturer's low competencies, lack of equipment in library and science laboratories, lack of qualified technologist, out dated curriculum among others affects negatively the quality of products from our polytechnics and universities.

16. Recommendations

1. The least qualifications of lecturers in our higher institutions of learning should not be less than master's degree. The master's degree holders should be attached to lower levels.
2. There should be continuous training for lecturers in both national and international conferences and seminars.
3. School libraries and science laboratories should be constantly upgraded and equipped with necessary equipments and chemicals. Practicals should be a priority.

4. People in Nigeria today hold educational certificates to prove that they are educated, and are used for employment. This should be discouraged. The performance during the recruitment exercise should be criteria for placement.
5. The current behavior of Nigerian leaders in the civil service, political position during after election does not send good sign to the society.
6. Political parties in power should look beyond their political parties for knowledgeable people to manage our scarce resources

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