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Fostering Graduate Employability: Rethinking Tanzania's University Practices

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Abstract

Globalization, partly spurred by technological innovation such as artificial intelligence and robotics, continues to disrupt not only economic trajectories and business models, especially in the developed world, but also the knowledge and skill requirements for graduates entering the labor market. A growing corpus of literature on graduates' employability has identified barriers to employment ranging from skills mismatch to a lack of soft skills. Although the literature on graduate employability is informative and illuminating, the role of university practices in fostering graduate employability in sub-Saharan Africa, and Tanzania in particular, has been less studied. Drawing on the broader employability literature, this article provides a comprehensive analysis of the best university practices in an effort to address the unemployment problems of university graduates in sub-Saharan Africa and Tanzania in particular. Four critical university best practices for fostering graduate employability are of interest—developing effective university—industry partnerships, aligning university education with a country's development plans, regular university curriculum reviews, and strengthening quality assurance systems. Therefore, this article contributes to the higher education literature on the role of university practices in fostering graduate employability.

Keywords

higher education, education, social sciences, sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania, employability, graduates

Introduction

Higher education (HE) discourse has long been dominated by the employability debate because the major aim of HE is to generate graduates who are workplace ready (Jackson, 2017; McGunagle & Zizka, 2020; Thomas et al., 2014). Due to its great importance, the employability of university graduates is a subject of much interest to researchers, policymakers, and curriculum planners around the world. The effects of graduate unemployability range from poor economic development and psychological problems (Bilgiç & Yılmaz, 2013; da Silva & Marcolan, 2015; Paul & Moser, 2009) to social unrest in some countries (Pervaiz et al., 2012). In Pakistan, for example, unemployment has been reported to trigger social unrest and psychological distress (Pervaiz et al., 2012). A study by Bilgiç and Yılmaz (2013) in Turkey revealed a correlation between graduate unemployment and psychological health problems among the sampled graduates.

A growing corpus of literature (see, e.g., Ding et al., 2017; Nghia, 2019) has confirmed that unemployment is common among university graduates in both developed and developing countries. For example, China produces over 7 million university graduates per year (Ding et al., 2017), but the number of unemployed graduates reached about 2 million in 2013 (Chan, 2015). In India, one of the largest HE systems in the world (second only to China), only 25% to 30% of graduates are employable (Tilak, 2020, p. 57). In Taiwan, evidence has been obtained that graduate unemployment exceeds employment rates at all other educational levels (Wu, 2011, p. 303).

According to Vedder et al. (2013, as cited in Nghia, 2019), graduate unemployment is also a problem in the United States, where about 48% of 4-year college graduates are not employed in jobs that require a degree (Nghia, 2019, p. xi).

The situation is not good in European countries either. For instance, in the United Kingdom, unemployment among graduates is around 47% (Mok & Jiang, 2018), and in Spain, unemployment among graduates is around 15.5% (Statista Portal, as cited in Nghia, 2019). In Japan, although there is no evidence available for the relationship between graduate

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unemployment rates and suicide rates, in their review, Chen et al. (2012) concluded that there is a strong correlation between unemployment and suicide rates (p. 76). As such, unemployment is a big challenge in many countries, especially developing countries such as Tanzania, where population growth outpaces employment growth (Amani, 2017; "Tanzania," 2016). Overall, global unemployment can also be attributed to the globalization of the labor market engendered by technological innovation, which demand new skills.

Some studies have established that globalization, partly spurred by technological innovation, has massively disrupted economic trajectories and business models (Walsh, 2018). Such disruption is increasingly displacing jobs and changing the skills needed in the labor market (Nghia, 2019; Oliver, 2015). For example, in Europe, the ongoing shift from a manufacturing to a service economy (Dolphin, 2015) is undeniably disrupting the labor market, requiring more skilled employees in addition to new skills. Similarly, 47% of jobs in the United States (Frey & Osborne, 2013), 40% in Australia (Durrant-Whyte et al., 2015), and 77% and 69% in China and India, respectively (Frey et al., 2016), are at risk due to automation. Other research (see, e.g., Peters, 2018, p. 4) has revealed that over the last decade, routine and manual labor have largely been replaced by automated machines through the use of artificial intelligence and robotics. Certainly, these developments are likely to alter the nature of jobs in both occupations and industries, spurring job losses. For example, Ford (2009, as cited in Peters, 2018) predicted that in two decades, technological developments would cause significant job losses, amounting to up to half of all jobs (p. 2).

Although numerous informative studies of unemployment and graduate employability have been conducted, many have been confined to developed countries (see, e.g., Bennett, 2019; Bradley et al., 2021; Jackson, 2016; Nghia, 2019; Oliver, 2015). As such, the few studies to consider African countries have predominantly addressed employment barriers (see e.g., Amani, 2017), employment challenges and the role of the state in economic development (e.g., Nangale, 2012), factors influencing graduate recruitment decisions (Fulgence, 2015), or academia–industry partnerships for hospitality and tourism education (Anderson & Sanga, 2019). The role of universities in graduate employability, especially work-integrated learning (WIL) and employability, has been intensively studied in developed countries, particularly in the last 5 years (Bennett, 2019; Ferns & Lilly, 2015; Jackson, 2016; Oliver, 2015; Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). However, the role of university practices in fostering graduate employability in sub-Saharan Africa, and Tanzania in particular, has been less studied. Therefore, this article examines how university practices in Tanzania can foster graduate employability and employment outcomes. This article contributes to the HE literature on the role of university practices in fostering graduate employability.

Following this auspicious introduction, the remainder of this article is organized as follows: Section "Tanzania's Higher Education and Unemployment Figures" provides a brief account of Tanzania's HE system and basic unemployment figures. Section "Graduate Employability: Global Overview" surveys global employability, and section "Graduate Employability and the Role of University Education" offers a detailed account of the role of HE in graduate employability. Section "Theoretical Framework" describes the theoretical lens used in this study. The methodology is described in section "Methods and Procedures," and in section "Findings and Discussion," the findings are presented and discussed along with university practices for fostering graduate employability. Study's limitations and areas for further research are offered in section "Final Consideration." Finally, based on the findings, section "Conclusions and Recommendations" presents the conclusions and recommendations.

Tanzania's Higher Education and Unemployment Figures

HE is recognized as an important pillar of economic, social, and political development in Tanzania. By 2019, the country had 41 universities, university colleges, and university centers. Of these, 14 were public universities (PUs) and university colleges, whereas 27 were private universities (PRUs) and university colleges (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2019). Student enrollment increased from 13 in 1961 (Mkude et al., 2003) to 209,144 in 2019 (NBS, 2019), albeit with challenges in terms of equity and education quality. Although PRUs account for 62.8% of universities, their student enrollment is only 68,851, or 32.9% of total enrollment, whereas PUs enrolled 140,293 students (67.1%) despite accounting for only 37.2% of all HE institutions (NBS, 2019). The enrollment characteristics of the two categories of universities suggest that PRUs' expansion of access to HE has been minimal, far less than that of their PU counterparts.

This study was conducted in the context of Tanzania, a developing country that is richly endowed with natural resources, but whose extractive industry is dominated by foreign companies and suppliers (E. Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016). Although the mining sector has co-existed with HE for decades and Tanzania produces some expert graduates in this subject area, investment in the sector is dominated by foreign companies. Similarly, foreign employees occupy the majority of key positions because local experts lack the requisite skills and knowledge to seize existing employment opportunities. Vaaland (2015) noted that foreign suppliers in developing countries with a fast-growing petroleum sector, including Tanzania, have long found it challenging to recruit local experts, as few meet industry requirements for employment. Other sectors, such as

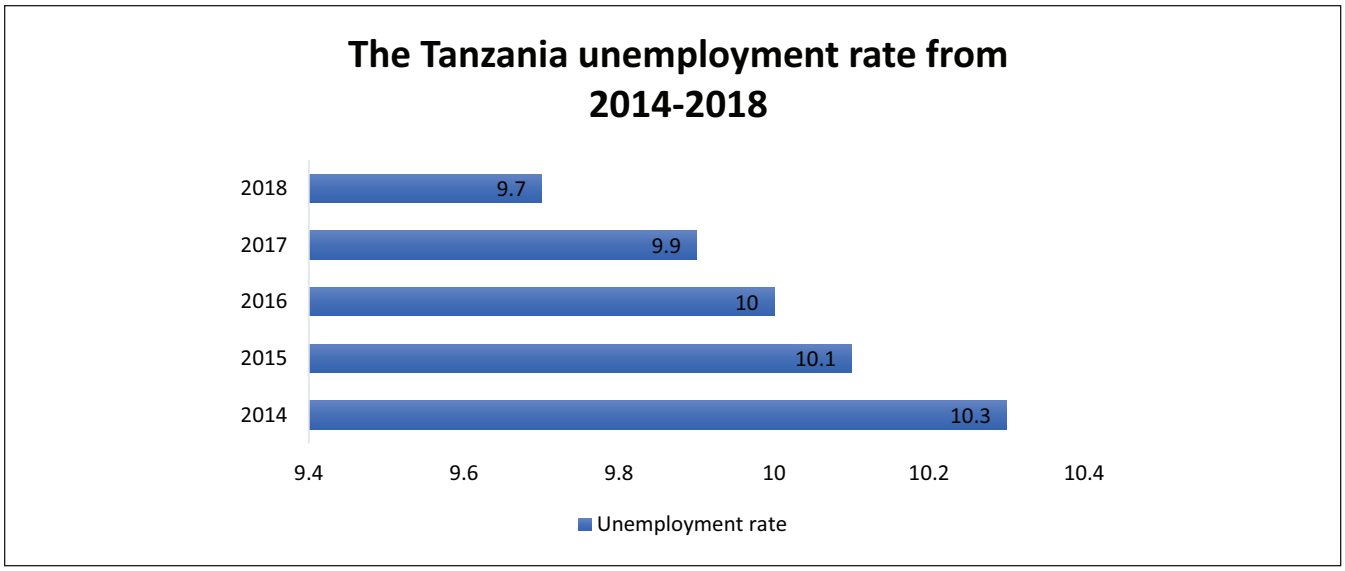


Figure 1. Unemployment rate in Tanzania from 2014 to 2018 in percent.
Source. National Bureau of Statistics (2018b).

Table 1. Unemployment of People Over 15 by Sex and Area, Tanzania Mainland.

	Area				
	Dar es Salaam	Other urban	Urban total	Rural	Total
Sex	%	%	%	%	%
Male	11.3	7.2	8.5	8	8.2
Female	32.2	12.5	18.2	8.9	12.3
Total	21.5	9.9	13.4	8.4	10.3

Source. United Republic of Tanzania (2017) *Human Development Index*.

mining, tourism, and manufacturing, have encountered a similar problem.

Although no recent employment data are available, data from 2016 show that 64.9% of Tanzania's employees were in the private sector in that year, whereas the public sector accounted for 35.1% of total employment (NBS, 2018a). These data suggest that, as in many countries, the private sector in Tanzania is the main employer of the country's workforce. Interestingly, while there was an increase in the number of employees in the private sector, the rate of employment in the public sector dropped from 36.7% in 2015 to 35% in 2016 (NBS, 2018b). This suggests that the Tanzanian government's ability to create employment in the public sector is decreasing slightly, and employment growth in the private sector remains minimal. This further suggests that there is a need for the government to assess its employment policies and determine how the two sectors can create more employment opportunities to reduce unemployment among youth. Although employment numbers indicate that the unemployment rate in Tanzania has dropped slightly, falling from 10.3% in 2014 to 9.7% in 2018 (NBS, 2018b), other available data suggest that 61% of graduates from Tanzanian universities are unfit for jobs (Nganga, 2014). Figure 1 illustrates the unemployment rate trend in Tanzania from 2014 to 2018.

The distribution of employment by sector shows that agriculture constitutes the largest share, at 63%, followed by the service sector, at 29.7%, and industry, at 7.3% (NBS, 2018b). These data seem to suggest that education is aligned with the sector that employs the largest group of people. However, unemployment in Tanzania is higher in urban than rural areas—13.4% versus 8.4% (URT, 2017). In addition, female unemployment is higher than male unemployment (see Table 1 for details).

Although it is difficult to obtain recent official graduate unemployment data in Tanzania, evidence presented at the National assembly of Tanzania in 2016 indicated that there were 27,614 unemployed graduates in that year. Of these, 14,271 were female and 13,343 were male ("Tanzania," 2016). Further evidence indicates that each year, about 900,000 Tanzanian youth enter the job market, which creates only 50,000 to 60,000 jobs each year (Gregory, 2017). In

other words, in excess of 800,000 youth, including university graduates, remain jobless. Some scholars (e.g., Mwagonde, 2014) have contended that only 20% of university graduates in Tanzania find employment each year, and employers claim that university graduates lack relevant job competencies (Munishi & Emmanuel, 2016). This suggests an increasing unemployment rate in the country; however, Tanzania's official statistics indicate that the rate of unemployment has dropped slightly, falling from 10.3% in 2014 to 9.7% in 2018 (NBS, 2019). This is comparable to the unemployment rate in the neighboring Kenya, which stood at 9.3% in 2019 (Plecher, 2020).

Graduate Employability: Global Overview

The pressure to produce employable graduates is an issue in virtually all countries—both developing and developed (Grotkowska et al., 2015; Jenkins & Lane, 2019; Metcalfe et al., 2020; Mok et al., 2016; Small et al., 2018). This is largely manifested in the onus on universities to churn out well-trained and employable graduates. In Australia, for example, the debate on employability over the last decade has been so fierce that graduate employability has become one of the most critical topics of HE research (Bennett, 2019; Clarke, 2018; Moore & Morton, 2017; Prikshat et al., 2019). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the debate on graduate employability has engendered policy shifts epitomized by a teaching excellence framework that largely focuses on whether universities produce employable graduates who fit the dynamic world of work (Jenkins & Lane, 2019; Steur et al., 2012). In South Africa, as in many other countries, universities are under pressure to produce employable graduates in response to general dissatisfaction with graduates' failing to meet the expectations of employers (Archer & Chetty, 2013). Interestingly, the United States faces a similar problem. To foster employable skills among its graduates, many universities are working to align conventional learning aims with the requirements of real-world conditions (Artess et al., 2017). Overall, universities worldwide are using a variety of strategies to improve their graduates' employability.

The concept of graduate employability has evolved over time, and scholars have conceptualized it in a variety of ways. Although charting the history of employability concept is not the purpose of this article, it is important to briefly highlight its development. The concept of employability has evolved from the relationship between education and labor markets in the 20th century (Clark, 1930, as cited in Boden & Nedeva, 2010) to personal skills and knowledge and the propensity to be employed in the 21st century (Lees, 2002, as cited in Boden & Nedeva, 2010). Due to the evolving nature of the concept, scholars have found it hard to agree on a universal definition of employability. Specifically, such definitions have changed over time based on the changing relationship between education and the labor market. For example, Hillage and Pollard (1998, p. xi) defined employability as "the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labor market to realize potential through sustainable employment." Harvey (2001) conceptualized employability as an individual attribute: "the propensity of the individual student to get employment" (p. 97). As recently as 2016, Bennett (2016) defined employability as the ability to find, create, and sustain meaningful work across lengthening working lives and multiple work settings. Table 2 presents the evolving definition of graduate employability over time.

According to Smith et al. (2009), employability as a framework of analysis has a critical role to play in updating government labor market policy (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005) and the education sector. Although scholars have conceptualized employability in different ways, the commonality among the definitions is that "employability" connotes a set of attributes and skills perceived as important for graduates to gain employment. Two principal representations of employability are distinguishable in the literature (Harvey, 2001). First, it is a common understanding that employability is simply gaining and retaining fulfilling work (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). However, recent literature has suggested that "graduate employability" refers to the individual possession of skills, knowledge, and other attributes acquired through a university education that help one secure and maintain employment (Suleman, 2018). This conceptualization draws on the work of the Higher Education Statistical Agency's graduate employment survey, which collects data on graduate employment 6 months after graduation, and serves as an employability performance indicator. Harvey (2001) posited that such conceptualizations of employability confuse outcomes and processes and present them as an institutional feature rather than as an individual's ability to gain employment. In other words, the traditional definition of employability does not allow one to focus on the efficacy of the educational process because the depiction is muddied by factors such as the state of labor markets. Generally, there has been a discursive shift in the concept of employability from a graduate acquiring a job to a situation whereby an individual acquires certain attributes that are appealing to employers. This discursive shift, according to Rose (1989), can be understood as quintessentially neoliberal in its emphasis on the individual.

Graduate employability has been on the global agenda for a couple of decades (see, e.g., Bennett, 2019; Crebert et al., 2004; Harvey, 2001; Laalo et al., 2019; Räty et al., 2019). This has occurred because of HE massification policies, which do not match employers' demands and, in most cases, translate into an oversupply of graduates to the market (Bennett, 2019; Guile, 2009; Mok & Qian, 2018). The massification of HE and ever-increasing global labor market competition have resulted in unpredictable transitions from education to the labor market (Brown et al., 2011). The literature has established that preparing employable graduates is a common challenge for HE systems, including those in

Table 2. The Evolving Definition of Employability.

Author(s)	Definition of employability
Hillage and Pollard (1998, p. xi)	Employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labor market to realize potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they possess; the way they use those assets and present them to employers; and the context (personal circumstances and labor market environment) within which they seek work.
Hinchcliffe (2001, p. 8, as cited in Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007)	Having a set of skills, knowledge, and personal attributes that make a person more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation.
Sanders and de Grip (2004, p. 76)	The capacity and willingness to be and to remain attractive in the labor market, by anticipating changes in tasks and work environment and reacting to those changes in a proactive way.
Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007, p. 280)	Having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding, and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful.
Hogan et al. (2013, p. 13)	The ability to gain and retain employment (including finding new employment when necessary).
Bennett (2016)	The ability to find, create, and sustain meaningful work across lengthening working lives and multiple work settings.

developed nations (Abou-Setta, 2014; Chistyakova et al., 2015; Holmes, 2008; Little, 2008; Sung et al., 2013; Tarvid, 2015; Wilton, 2008). This is largely due to the dynamics of the graduate labor market, which keep changing and requiring new skills and knowledge.

To ensure that graduates have employable skills, scholars have suggested various strategies. Some have suggested a framework that emphasizes the role of HE in fostering the employability of graduates (Knight & Yorke, 2003). For example, the need for employable graduates and tighter links between universities and economic interests has compelled a policy shift in European countries such that universities are required to advance their students' employability by setting standards that emphasize entrepreneurial skills (Laalo et al., 2o19). Other scholars have recommended that stakeholders form integrated partnerships to smooth graduates' transition from university to employment (Prikshat et al., 2019). Other scholars (see, e.g., Jackson, 2017; Oliver, 2015; Sonnenschein et al., 2019) have recommended work-integrated learning (WIL) as a solution to graduate employability.

The debate on how graduate employability and employment can be improved is ongoing. However, in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, and Tanzania in particular, where economic performance is not creating employment opportunities quickly enough for youth and graduates (Filmer & Fox, 2014; Fine et al., 2012; Page & Shimeles, 2015), the role of universities has received less attention. Certainly, an accountable university must strive to improve outcomes by planning how graduates can affect the labor market with the skills and knowledge they gain, not just pride itself on the number of graduates it produces or the number of professors it has. Improving outcomes is universities' most critical task to help solve the challenge of graduate unemployability. This is related to the critical issue of unstable transitions from college to the job market, which is largely due to HE massification policies that have engendered an oversupply of graduates in a rather stunted job market (Mok & Qian, 2018, p. 339). The other challenge has to do with the mismatch between graduates' skills and the jobs available in the market (Amani, 2017; Mirondo, 2017; Mok & Qian, 2018; Prikshat et al., 2019). To address this challenge, there has been a debate among scholars (see, e.g., Allen et al., 2013) as to whether universities should prepare their graduates in response to the needs of industry or industry should respond to the human resources (graduates) produced by universities. This debate has mostly accused governments of not being sufficiently proactive in preparing an environment conducive to graduate employability. However, the role of universities in preparing employable graduates in sub-Saharan Africa, and Tanzania in particular, has not been at the center of this debate.

Graduate Employability and the Role of University Education

Although industries are recognized as critical agents of graduate employability, they must partner with other stakeholders to provide employment opportunities to university graduates. Universities are an important agent in addressing graduate unemployment by making their graduates employable through best practices such as WIL (Jackson, 2016; Oliver, 2015), internship opportunities (Clarke, 2018), and curriculum development with insights from important stakeholders (Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). HE plays an essential role in ensuring that its graduates are employable. For example, universities could establish degree programs based on a market needs assessment, effective quality assurance systems, and effective university−industry partnerships and collaborations.

A critical and global concern today is graduates' transition from college to the labor market, which has been impacted by HE massification around the world (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Mok et al., 2016). This affects both the community and HE institutions. As such, mechanisms are

required for HE institutions to make their graduates not only employable but also innovative and creative enough to compete for the few jobs available in the job market. Due to the competition created by the mismatch between available jobs and the number of graduates entering the job market, students face increasing pressure to improve their academic credentials to add more value to their skills and be more employable and competitive. Accordingly, scholars have treated work placement through HE and industry partnerships as critical strategies for making graduates more employable (Clarke, 2018). Other strategies for making graduates more employable include the establishment of internships and unpaid work placements to enable graduates to gain experience and skills suited to the creative sector (Ashton, 2011; Bridgstock, 2011).

From a sociological point of view, Allen et al. (2013) argued that work placement is a vehicle for making HE graduates more employable through university partnerships with the creative sector (p. 433). This argument is in response to the question of whether universities should prepare graduates based on market needs or if industry should respond to the skills graduates gain from universities. From this perspective, universities should respond to market needs, as the labor market is constantly changing.

From a political point of view, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) envisage the promotion of sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). Accordingly, the United Nations has identified the provision of quality education as a critical success factor for achieving other goals (Nam & Ansong, 2015; United Nations, 2015). To link the United Nations' SDGs to the African context, the African Union, of which Tanzania is a member, has set a 2063 target whose second goal focuses on creating a well-educated society and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology, and innovation (African Union, 2016). Translating the SDGs even further, Tanzania, based on its Vision 2025, is striving to ensure that it has a critical mass of educated citizens with employable skills to address poverty in the country and meet the specific skill requirements of its envisaged industry-led economy (NBS, 2019).

Importantly, universities must partner with industries to determine what type of knowledge and skills are required in the job market. What practices do universities need to adopt to make their graduates employable? In answering this question, this article contributes to the long-standing debate on how the unemployability of university graduates can be addressed through university practices. This article also contributes to the HE literature by providing universities with information on how to improve graduate transition to the labor market, which is a critical problem in both developed and developing countries (Bennett, 2019; Chistyakova et al., 2015; Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017; Sung et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The debate on employability has been based on two theories: human capital and human development. This study focused on human capital theory (HCT), originally proposed in the 18th century by Adam Smith and later popularized by Becker (1962). "Human capital" refers to a collection of individual attributes, such as knowledge, skills, experience, training, abilities, talent, intelligence, and judgment. The fundamental argument of HCT is that education and training are investments that make people more productive. Accordingly, individuals who are more productive will earn more and be more employable. Scholars (see, e.g., Becker, 1962; Sicherman & Galor, 1990) have argued that quality HE (i.e., training) can make it easier for a person to find employment and build a career. The theory suggests that employability characterizes the way in which a person enhances his or her desirability to the world of work.

Analyzing employability using the lens of human capital as a theoretical frame, regular university curriculum reviews, competence development through university–industry partnerships, strengthened quality assurance systems, and the alignment of university education with the country's development plans are important aspects of shaping and improving a person's employability. As a result, the quality of skills, knowledge, training, experiences, abilities, talent, and intelligence developed through HE forms the human capital for obtaining employment. According to HCT, human capital represents the quality of labor (i.e., skills and knowledge), whereas labor denotes employers' perceived factor of production (Mohr & Seymore, 2012). HCT was considered an appropriate theoretical lens for this research, with an emphasis on investing in human capital to enhance graduate employability and reduce unemployment.

Methods and Procedures

Methods

This study adopted a narrative literature review as its research methodology, with a view to building new knowledge by synthesizing existing knowledge (Snyder, 2019). Scholars (see, e.g., Palmatier et al., 2018; Snyder, 2019) have argued that if well conducted, a literature review is an effective research methodology for knowledge development, as it can generate fresh ideas and guidance for a particular research area. Based on the aim of this study, a semi-systematic or narrative review approach was used, because this method was expected to help identify theoretically pertinent university practices with implications for graduate employability and integrate these practices through meta-narratives as an alternative strategy to examine effect size (Wong et al., 2013). Scholars (see, e.g., Ward et al., 2009) have argued that a narrative literature review is a helpful research method for identifying themes, common issues surrounding certain research areas, and theoretical

concepts, which were clearly relevant to this study. As such, a narrative literature review or semi-systematic review can generate a future research agenda for a specific topic. Based on this methodology, this narrative literature review aimed to identify common themes relating to ways of fostering graduate employability and to suggest a new research agenda. To explore and integrate the results of the narrative review, thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative research to detect, analyze, and report patterns or themes within a text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, documents such as journal articles, the Employment and Labour Relations Act, the Tanzania Higher Education Policy, Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics reports on unemployment, and political documents related to education were used to generate data on how university practices can help foster graduate employability in Tanzania.

Truth value, which includes reflection on one's own perspectives to ensure consistency and neutrality (i.e., achieving auditability), was also considered, and transparent and clear descriptions of the research process from the initial outline through the development of methods and reporting of findings were provided (Noble & Smith, 2015, p. 3). In addition, an applicability strategy was used, in which the researcher reflected on the wider employability discourse and the application of the findings to contexts beyond Tanzania. This included providing details of the HE context in which graduates study before joining the labor market and the evaluation of conclusions in the literature and their transferability to other contexts.

Procedures

Before the analysis, documents were accessed and reviewed for suitability and inclusion as data sources. Some sources were included at a later stage when necessary. To ensure the credibility of the data sources, three criteria were used to select documents: (a) journal articles from refereed journals; (b) employment and unemployment documents prepared to communicate to the public details of employment and unemployment in Tanzania and beyond; and (c) official documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). To ensure that the data made sense, all of the documents were systematically analyzed to determine how universities can foster the employability of their graduates. Based on the analyses, the researcher developed themes deductively and subthemes inductively (Ezzy, 2002). The scope of analysis of graduate employability was limited to university graduates.

Findings and Discussion

Establishing University–Industry Partnerships

The nexus between universities, which prepare the workforce (i.e., graduates), and industries (i.e., employers), which employ that workforce, is important, especially as countries strive to build knowledge-based economies. According to Mbah (2014), the lack of partnerships may result in the absence of programs, courses, and subjects relevant to potential employment. Although scholars have underscored the importance of developing effective HE systems that address the unemployment of graduates (Mpehongwa, 2013), establishing partnerships between HE institutions and employers to provide HE through this modality remains a pressing challenge in most systems (Alves et al., 2007; Brimble & Doner, 2007; De Weert, 2011; E. Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016; Mpehongwa, 2013). Similarly, in Tanzania, partnerships between academia and industry seem to be weak (Fussy, 2019; E. Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016; Mpehongwa, 2013). Such weak university–industry linkage suggests a reduction in the use of university research by industry, less consultancy work provided by universities to industry, and fewer student internships. Similarly, when there is no effective partnership between universities and industry, it is difficult for universities to gain insight into the knowledge and skills required to meet industry needs, as employers are the main consumers of university graduates in the form of employees. Effective partnership between HE and industries could help in solving the problem of key employment positions being dominated by foreigners in sectors such as extractives. Collaborative training and educational activities and consulting and research activities are among the benefits of university–industry partnerships. Therefore, effective university–industry partnerships foster graduate employability in the sense that universities learn from employers which skills are relevant and should be integrated into their programs.

To overcome unemployment challenges, scholars have suggested that HE should be integrated with the knowledge economy and a country's industrial strategic plans to build a strong and effective nexus between industry and HE systems (Altbach et al., 2009; E. Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2008). In addition, scholars have provided some exemplary case studies, such as China, the Netherlands, and Singapore, that address the mismatch between HE and skills supply and ways of making HE more relevant to the labor market, by increasing partnerships with employers and industries (De Weert, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2012; Wang & Liu, 2011).

Joseph and Payne (2011), arguing from the perspective of cooperative education, identified partnerships between academia and industry as an essential strategy for dealing with unemployability in the emerging global knowledge economy. Their argument is based on the corpus of literature that has regarded university–industry partnerships as essential in aligning students' internship experiences with the learning objectives and outcomes of their majors. Arguably, the competencies and knowledge acquired through internships can enhance students' employability in the global knowledge economy. In addition, Tetrevova and Vlckova (2018) contended that the main contribution of university–industry

partnerships lies in creating competitiveness through knowledge transfer and the production of high-quality graduates who meet the needs of the current global labor market.

In the United Kingdom, university–industry partnerships take a different form through the financing of some university programs. For example, government initiatives fund programs to build capacity that encourage universities to partner with employers in the design and delivery of HE to inculcate skills based on market needs (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, 2008, p. 7). Inevitably, if universities design educational programs without engaging employers, such programs may fall short of societal needs and cause graduates to suffer unemployment. However, partnerships between universities and employers to develop an employable workforce while addressing the unemployment problem have not gone without criticism. For example, some scholars (see, e.g., Lester & Costley, 2010; Usher & Solomon, 1999) have questioned the quality of work-based qualifications compared with conventional HE. These scholars have also perceived employers' interest in the education of their employees to be predominantly contributory rather than developmental. Similarly, Giroux (2003) criticized university–industry partnerships by arguing that they exemplify the state initiative to drive HE to serve commercial interests, with detrimental effects not only for academics but also for students and communities.

Alignment of University Education With a Country's Development Plans

Generally, there has been a misalignment between what a country aspires to achieve in the short, medium, and long term and the response of HE institutions in terms of program offerings. Most African countries are former colonies of Western countries, and their initial education systems at virtually all levels reflected colonial education. Although African HE was not directly inherited from the colonizers, the HE system established after independence was borrowed from them, due to their continuing influence after independence. As a result, African HE did not reflect the context and needs of Africans. In some countries, such as former Belgian colonies, university education was illegal (M. S. Ekundayo & Ekundayo, 2009; Teferra & Altbach, 2004).

After independence, African countries wanted education systems with the capability to serve the broader community, including addressing issues of ignorance, poverty, and disease. In Tanzania, for example, the country sought to refine the purpose of education soon after independence. In his inaugural speech, the Prime Minister of the newly independent Tanganyika (now Tanzania), *Mwalimu* Julius Nyerere, said,

> Our young men and women must have an African-oriented education, that is, an education which is not only given in Africa, but also directed at meeting the present needs of Africa . . . our present plans must be directed at reaching the village. (Ekundayo & Adedokun, 2009, p. 1)

The late *Mwalimu* Julius Nyerere suggested that as an independent country, Tanzania needed education not only provided in the African environment but also responsive to African problems, especially for villagers who were more challenged by poverty, ignorance, and diseases. However, more than half a century after political independence, African countries, and sub-Saharan Africa in particular, still face problems similar to those faced at independence in the early 1960s. Mkude et al. (2003) observed that the HE curriculum in Tanzania reflects a compartmentalized and static view of knowledge. It has also been observed that African HE has largely retained static colonial views that do not address current African developmental issues (Mkude et al., 2003; Mosha, 1986). As a result, it has been difficult for HE to delve into a new system that addresses contextual issues, such as the low-performing agricultural sector. Although the government bears the blame for its negligence of the agricultural sector, the contribution of the HE sector is critical.

Generally, Tanzania's universities and their degree programs have been neither proactive in supporting nor reactive to the country's development plans. Although the country's development plan and priorities have changed considerably over time, the HE system in terms of institutions and programs has remained more or less the same, failing to reflect the broader needs of the country over time. Approximately 65% to 75% of Tanzania's population is employed in agricultural sector. As such, the country's economy is largely dependent on the agricultural sector. However, apart from the recently established university of agriculture in Butiama, which has yet to admit students, only one university of agriculture (Sokoine University of Agriculture) has been established since independence to prepare experts to serve Tanzania's agricultural community. Similarly, the programs offered at other non-agricultural universities have been unable to meet the broader needs of the agricultural sector. Logically, more universities should offer agricultural education given the proportion of the population employed in agriculture. Consequently, the country lacks an intellectually sound workforce in the agricultural sector. For example, the shortage of extension officers (i.e., agricultural experts at local level) has long been the subject of public outcry. Although extension officers represent an employment opportunity by itself, the agricultural sector will only be able to effectively employ more men and women when adequate agricultural expertise is produced by the HE sector. Similarly, Tanzania is richly endowed with extractive resources ranging from minerals to newly discovered fuel and natural gas. Despite that the sector have existed for years, yet the employment of key positions in companies in this sector is dominated by foreign employees. Therefore, as the country depend much on extractives, HE should be

designed such that it produces adequate experts who will seize important employment opportunities in this sector.

Another clear paradox is the incumbent government's stance, which has envisaged building an industrial-led economy. Although establishing an industry-led economy remains high on the government's agenda, to what extent do university programs support the realization of this noble idea in terms of relevant programs for small- to large-scale industries? Will there be a needs assessment to identify new labor market needs as the country shifts from an agricultural to an industrial-led economy? If these questions are not properly answered, the country will continue to face a daunting unemployment challenge. When a country aspires to develop an industry-led economy, its HE emphasis should be on technical and technological programs. Shockingly, gas and oil have had a similar trend to agriculture, as degree programs in these study areas were only established in the past 3 or 4 years at the University of Dar es Salaam. Although the last two decades have seen the establishment of several HE degree programs to respond to the development needs of the country, there is a dire need for a wider HE review to ensure that HE offerings are compatible with the country's short- and long-term development goals.

Regular University Curriculum Reviews

The history of HE in Africa indicates that most HE institutions originated after independence. As such, HE in virtually all African countries has largely reflected and still reflects a colonial education system. After independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, most African countries adopted the HE systems of their former colonizers in terms of curriculum, academic structure, language, governance, and instructional methods (Mohamedbhai, 2014). This situation inevitably calls into question whether such an educational system is relevant in the context of a free Africa today.

Although it is more than half a century since some African countries gained political independence, African HE still faces several barriers, including the question of relevance (Mgaiwa, 2020). A growing body of literature on African HE has suggested that the question of the relevance of HE is evident in the mismatch between education curricula and labor market requirements (Mkude et al., 2003; Mohamedbhai, 2014). In addition, very few HE institutions use tracer studies or employer surveys to find out how useful the skills that graduates acquire are to their employers. According to Bradley et al. (2021), employability can be taught; therefore, it is vital to teach employability as part of the core curriculum in a degree program and review the curriculum to determine the relevance of the skills taught to labor market needs. However, universities in Tanzania have rarely reviewed their curricula to keep pace with changing job market demands and maintain the relevance of their programs. For example, the Open University of Tanzania has not comprehensively reviewed its curriculum since its inception (Rwejuna, 2013). Along with addressing the question of relevance through curriculum reviews, universities today should include some form of WIL in their curricula to foster the employability of their graduates (Artess et al., 2017; Clarke, 2018). Indeed, scholars have credited WIL with enhancing the employability of graduates (Clarke, 2018; Wilton, 2012) and augmenting their possibility of employment (Artess et al., 2017). Although some studies have indicated mixed results regarding the role of WIL in curricula (Hazenberg et al., 2015; Mason et al., 2009), several studies (see, e.g., Taylor & Hooley, 2014) have found that integrating learning and work increases the number of graduates securing employment more rapidly than other approaches. Considering the United Nations' SDGs, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and Tanzania's Vision 2025 on education, there is every reason for regular HE curriculum reviews to be aligned with global, regional, and national development and political agendas.

Strengthening Quality Assurance Systems

Quality assurance (QA) systems are a recent development in education, although methods of confirming that education meets required standards have been in existence for a long time (J. M. Ishengoma, 2007; Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2017). Given the strong need for HE and the involvement of private providers, and especially because education has become a commodity, QA is important for protecting consumers. In addition, a QA system serves as an accountability measure for education providers (Tam, 2001). Generally, QA systems ensure that universities are not reduced into degree mills. Studies have shown that a major reason for graduate unemployability is poor education because of weak QA systems in some universities. For example, some universities in Tanzania reportedly have inadequate academic faculty to offer university programs, yet still offer these programs (Makulilo, 2012; Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016; Peter, 2014). This indicates a major weakness in the authorities responsible for coordinating and accrediting university education. As recently as 2016, some improvements appear to have been made by Tanzania Commision for Universities [TCU]. For example, in 2016, TCU revoked its approval for the constituent college of St. Joseph University of Tanzania (Songea Campus) because of noncompliance with QA guidelines and the failure to provide education that met the required standards (Kolumbia, 2016; Mgaiwa, 2020). Similarly, in September 2018, the TCU deregistered two private university centers (Teofilo Kisanji-Tabora Centre and the St. John's University-Msalato Centre) and barred five universities from admitting new students for the 2018/2019 academic year, demanding that their students be transferred to other universities (TCU, 2018). To improve university education, the TCU should be vigilant in ensuring that programs offered, meet requisite standards and labor market requirements.

Although the general view of a quality education is one that combines education and work (Artess et al., 2017; Clarke, 2018; Ferns & Lilly, 2015; Oliver, 2015), there has long been concern about the lack of a nexus between education and work in many developing countries, thus making graduates unemployable (Amani, 2017). Scholars have suggested that university training should involve WIL to boost the employability and employment prospects of university graduates (Artess et al., 2017; Clarke, 2018; Ferns & Lilly, 2015; Oliver, 2015; Wilton, 2012). Due to the role of HE in graduate employability, HE regulatory bodies in the United Kingdom and Australia are increasingly focusing on WIL for graduate employability (Ferns & Lilly, 2015). Based on the overriding need to produce employable graduates with favorable employment outcomes, QA systems should be designed to evaluate graduates' employability using employability audits (Harvey, 2001). Such audits directly assess the extent to which graduates from a particular HE institution or degree program have attained agreed or standard employability attributes. To address shortcomings, total quality management (TQM) is important to ensure that programs not only are needed by employers but also integrate work and education. In addition, to ensure quality and competitive graduates for the labor market as envisaged in the SDGs, the African Union's Vision 2063, and Tanzania's Vision 2025, quality HE is essential.

Final Consideration

As with virtually all research, this study had its shortcomings, which provide opportunities for further research. For example, it considered only university graduates in developing countries and sub-Saharan African countries in particular. Therefore, future research could focus on how employability can be enhanced at other educational levels in both developed and developing countries. Second, this study was a literature review; future research could use empirical methods to determine how employability can be enhanced to deepen our understanding of best practices for universities to foster graduate employability.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although there are diverse approaches to improving graduate employability worldwide, in Tanzania, graduate employability receives insufficient emphasis from the government and universities despite the large number of citizens studying at degree level. This study used Tanzania as a setting to assess how university practices can foster graduate employability.

Overall, the findings of this study signal that best university practices such as university–industry partnerships, aligning university educational programs with a country's development plans, regular university curriculum reviews, and strengthening QA systems are critical to nurture employable graduates. This article argues that graduate employability cannot be improved simply by employing quality academics, issuing loans to students in need, and funneling recurrent and development funds to universities. Employability can be enhanced only by capitalizing on university practices to enhance graduates' skills to make them attractive to potential employers. As a starting point, the government and universities alike should consider transforming university management systems to link them to industry. As such, they must review employment policy frames by effectively engaging all of the key stakeholders, and universities in particular, to redesign education systems such that they meet graduate employability needs at the national, regional, and global market levels. Thus, improving graduate employability will involve all stakeholders in finding a lasting solution to the vexing unemployment problem among university graduates in Tanzania and other countries.

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