

EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTION OF COVENANT UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

Executive Summary

According to Nicholas Negroponte, “No matter what global problem you are dreading, whether it’s the elimination of poverty, whether it’s the creation of peace, whether its solving environmental energy problems, the solution- whatever it is- multiple solutions, the solutions always include education.” The quality of education almost always determines the quality of productivity and development worldwide. These profound statements succinctly capture the essence and significance of this study. Having been in operation for over twelve years now, it is appropriate at this time to evaluate Employers’ perception of Covenant University [CU] graduates. This exercise is apt to inform CU management what to strengthen or change for overall improvement of its education delivery services. Such exercise is a norm in virtually all in institutions operating Total Quality Management [TQM] systems worldwide. It is against this background this study was undertaken.

The problems that prompted this study were firstly, Employers’ dissatisfaction with the quality of graduates produced by Nigerian Universities. Many present day graduates were described as half-baked; and secondly, Covenant Universities’ concern about the performance of their graduates, which is an indication of the fulfillment of the institutions’ vision and mission statements.

Consequently, the objectives of this study were to: ascertain the work skills and traits highly rated by Employers as necessary for job effectiveness; know the extent to which Covenant University [CU] graduates meet Employers’ expectations in terms of job effectiveness; find out the outstanding traits observed in CU graduates in the workplace; find out the disappointing traits observed in CU graduates in the workplace; find out the areas that CU graduates require re-training; know the institutions that produced the best performing students in the workplace in the past 4 years?; ascertain Employers’ willingness to accept CU students for SIWES programme; ascertain Employers’ willingness to employ CU graduates; ascertain Employers’ willingness to assist in equipping CU undergraduates with professional skills required in the workplace and to collate Employers’ suggestions for Covenant University management in terms of preparing students for the world of work?

The research design for this study was survey, using questionnaire and interview guidelines as data collection instruments. The population for this study was all the Graduates of Covenant University from 2006 to date and their respective Employers. Approximately, they are about 7000 graduates. A target sample of 1000 Covenant University Graduates and their respective Employers were attempted. After several months’ effort to reach the Graduates and their Employers, the research team was eventually able to reach thirty nine [39] Graduates and their Employers. This partly accounted for the ‘Pilot Study Report’ tag given to this document.

Data collected was analysed with simple descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentages.

The core findings made in this pilot study are as follows:

Finding 1: The four [4] highest rated work skills/attributes, that were rated by Employers as ‘very important’ were: Communicative skill; Problem Solving skill; Basic Knowledge of Core concepts in the field of work and Conforming with Work Ethics.

Finding 2: Very few of the sampled Employers responded to the question on ‘extent to which CU Graduates met Employers’ Expectations’. The overriding judgment of the few Employers who responded was that Covenant University graduates met their expectation only moderately or averagely.

Finding 3: Again, only few of the sampled Employers responded to the questions of outstanding and disappointing traits observed in CU graduates. From the few Employers who responded, Isolation [hardly engaging in social interaction] featured as the most prominent disappointing trait, followed by lack of professionalism, lateness, Nonchalant attitude and inability to meet timelines . The most outstanding features of CU graduates reported were: dedication to duty, commitment and consistency.

Finding 4: Two key areas where CU graduates needed to be upgraded or re-trained, as reported by the sampled Employers, were: teamwork and leadership skills.

Finding 5: University of Lagos received the highest first rating as the institution that has produced the best performing students in the past 4 years, followed by Covenant University and University of Ibadan in that order.

Finding 6: Majority of the Employers sampled [69%] were willing to accept CU students for SIWES programme but none of them signified in categorical terms their willingness to employ them.

Finding 7: Majority of the sampled Employers [72%] expressed willingness to assist in equipping CU undergraduates with professional skills required in the workplace.

Finding 8: The most prominent suggestion was ‘continuity’. The Employers interviewed strongly recommended that Covenant University should endeavour to maintain its standard. Other recommendations were: CU should intensify on training and capacity building of its staff; Relate teaching to solve real life issues and inculcate in the students team work skills.

Bearing in mind the sample size of this pilot study and the limitations of this study, it should be reiterated that some degree of caution need be applied when interpreting these findings. Consequently, all the inferences, interpretations and extrapolations made here are speculative. There is clearly a need for more longitudinal study to reach more Employers to allow for more reliable and valid generalization

The findings were discussed in the light of current literatures while the following are recommended:

- A pragmatic review of the current programme curriculum and course compacts should be made in collaboration with world class Industries and Employers of labour with the aim of deleting redundant courses and programmes and injecting more industry and society relevant programmes;
- The strategy of inculcating the university core values, which are clearly needed in the world of work, as confirmed by this pilot study, should be reviewed to engender a significantly better result. On no account should Employers be finding CU graduates isolates, lacking professionalism, coming late to work, closing early or not working assiduously during work hours, exhibiting Nonchalant attitude to work and hardly meeting timelines.
- There is need to make this study statutory and longitudinal to allow for a more pragmatic development of a