



Job Placement, Polytechnic Marketing Graduates and Nigerian Development in the 21ST Century: Implication for the Business Education

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to look into the problems of job placement for polytechnic marketing graduates. One hundred and ninety-nine marketers were sampled from Lever Brothers Plc and PZ Industries Plc, both in Aba, Abia State of Nigeria. The response rate of 81% was achieved. Respondents were of the view that placement opportunities abound for the graduates, although sometimes these are rejected for various reasons advanced. The role of employers in making job placement was also sourced from marketers while factors determining choice of marketing placement by Polytechnic graduates were also determined. The paper concluded that a better entrepreneurial awareness be organized during Industrial training in order to make them more useful in the present scheme of things. The internet tool would also be very relevant for them to efficiently track and brand goods and services for sales. The Business Educator should embark on Action Research, using the classroom setting to engage scholars in brainstorming geared towards improved marketing. Educating for and about business would therefore ensure that consumers do not now the line of 'herd behaviour' (impulse buying)

Keywords: Job placement; impulse buying; segmentation; herd behavior; digital marketing; role instrumentality; team work

1. INTRODUCTION (CONCEPTS)

Marketing is a pervasive and complex series of activities whose outcome affects not only the fate of organizations, but also the welfare of consumers and the society in general (Ejiofor, 1989 and www.netmba.com>marketing>concept>). Wikipedia (2015) describes Marketing as involving communicating the value of a product, service or brand to customers for the purpose of promoting or selling the commodity. These could be tackled through product marketing, pricing, distribution, service, retail, brand- management and licensing as well as professional ethics and accounting.

For over two decades now, the wrong placement of the marketing graduates on the job has emerged to the detriment of the economy. Job placement is the fixing or putting of employees in already stated job positions, after confirming their possession of the required skills, aptitudes, personality, qualification and personal disposition for a given job (Hoffman, 1990). Bassey (1992) and www.business.rutgers.edu>academics, quoting marketing curriculum segmented it into the following:

- Marketing (professional) competency: selling, sales promotion, buying operations, marketing research and management.
- Technology competency: skill, knowledge of product and services.
- Social competency: Appearance, traits, attitudes, human relations.
- Basic skill competency: Applied mathematics, communication in work situations.
- Economic situations: Co-ordination of other competences, government regulations, role of profits, consumer demands, channels of distribution and entrepreneurial abilities.
- High-Tech: Tracking abilities.

According to Adock, Al Halborg and Ross (2001) tackling marketing problems gave rise to the emergence of the following steps:

- Target marketing – involving both production and product orientation,
- Market segmentation – utilizing the study of marketing environment to project sales, selling orientation and promotion of sales,
- Consumer behaviour – involving Research and Development (R and D) for satisfaction of the yearnings of the customer,
- Tracking ability – to ensure efficiency in service delivery (here the use of MKIS' software and hardware are applied,
- Holistic approach – where everything matters in line with the complex nature of both producer and consumer.

A job is an activity, often regular, which is performed in exchange for payment. A person usually begins a job by becoming an employee or volunteering to perform given tasks for an organization. Placement is the appropriate designating of an employee to a position to perform given tasks in an organization. This affords the opportunity of hands-on experience for the employee. Where achievement tests are appropriately used to ascertain competencies the marketing/business education students have attained as a result of instructions/training, efforts should be made to place graduates properly on jobs to avoid their rustication these

competencies and to ensure maximum use of their worth for the benefit of the society and those of the graduates (Umunah, 1992). It is observable that where these graduates are not placed on the right jobs on graduation, they may reject the offer of employment or resort to going private, which is, operating small scale business. For purposes of entrepreneurship, this is currently welcomed, but the business should be properly defined to avoid another era of 419 (advance fee fraud) business. The situation could also culminate into failed businesses.

In the present millennium, trained marketers would be expected not only to handle the complexities of computer-related activities, but also to serve more alert citizens; examples are services to disadvantaged, service emphases, digital marketing trends, among others. This may have informed BusinessDictionary.com (2015) definition of marketing as “Management process through which goods and services move from the concept stage to the customer acceptance” stages of satisfying the consumer yearnings of the society. Education and experience are two very important considerations of employers which are seen as directly affecting work ability while experience is seen as affecting general knowledge emanating from teachers skills that are not acquired in the classroom (Levitt 1999). Although Lusch and Serpkenci (1990) saw effective management of human resources in retailing as critically important for achieving a competitive market position and a high turnover, the motivational theories of human behaviour and performance, the role of self-esteem as well as the effect of role instrumentalities vis-à-vis teamwork with others have been stressed by researchers in the past and cannot be neglected.

With the Marketing history of the ‘60s focusing on relationship marketing (to gain customer goodwill) to that of the ‘80s based on Industrial/business relationship of marketing (focus is on organizations with unions and business interests paramount), then the ‘90s witnessed societal relationship (taking care to curtail harmful practices to the society) and finally the present day branding and tracking (utilizing the instrumentality of technology via the internet (Goldstein and Lee, 2005). Part of the components of marketing plan should include correct placement of experts in the field so that both segmentation and standardization in firms must be properly assured. According to Oladebo (1991), unemployment is one of those common phenomena that every nation struggles to reduce in order to improve the life style of its citizens. Reduction in unemployment is certainly what placement of experts in their various groups would lead to. With capital and natural resources as passive factors of production while human beings are active agents who accumulate, exploit, build and carry forward all the other resources for national and personal development. Most decidedly, personality and individual well-being of human beings are often influenced by work and institutions of employment especially as without employment people cannot locate themselves socially.

On the educational perspective, Business Education which focuses on equipping graduates (Marketing/Business) with knowledge for and about business would do well to embark on a drive aimed at ensuring that graduates fit into the current scheme of things. The Office Manager ensures that appropriate placements made are properly documented to guide future reorganization and re-shuffling of placement. However, the approach or avoidance of environments, job positions or marketing inclusive, has been found by Donovan and Rositer (1982) to be as a result of the perceptions of the environment. Thus, when properly placed and properly handled on the job as benefits the occupation, job mobility of employees would reduce.

Based on the above expositions, it is necessary to look into the problems of job placement of Polytechnic marketing/business graduates.

Statement of the Problem

About three-quarters of the total existing organizations are production-based, although marketing/business graduates are still not properly placed. Some employers do not know all the job positions available for placing the graduates (Eyes, 1999). Sometimes, the graduates are not aware of available job positions for themselves, while those jobs offered them may not be deemed satisfactory. Furthermore, graduates may be afraid of the adequacy of their skills to handle specific job tasks efficiently. The rejection of known available job placements could lead to unemployment which could result to more vices in the economy. Claims abound that many unemployed persons constitute nuisance to the society (www.merriam-webster.com>dictionary and Oladebo, 1991).

In the light of the above, this study addressed the employment placement opportunities available to polytechnic marketing/business graduates. Specifically, the study aimed at determining the possible employment opportunities for the graduates, the role of employers in marketing employment.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses were formulated to assist the study in looking into the problems:

1. What are the available job placements for polytechnic marketing graduates?
2. What are the roles of employers in job placement of marketing graduates?
3. What factors can influence choice of employment for marketing graduates?
4. There is no significant agreement among the rating of respondents that there are available job placements for marketing graduates ($=0.05$).
5. Level of qualification is not a determinant of ratings over the role of employers in job placement of marketing graduates/
6. There is no agreement in rating according to qualification, over the factors influencing choice of employment by graduates.

2. METHODOLOGY

The survey design was used for this study. This was informed by the subject-matter which required the perceptions of opinions of people. This is recommended by Ali (1996) when the perceptions are to be described to readers.

The sample of this study was made up of 119 marketers from Lever Brothers Plc (Unilever Plc) and Patterson Zoconis (PZ) industries Plc, both in different states of Nigeria. The whole population of over 8,000 workers was randomly sampled because of the relatively large nature of the number.

Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. It was sectioned into A, B and C while demographic data on qualification of the marketers (respondents) was sourced. A four-point scale of SA (strongly agree) – 4, A (agree) – 3, D (disagree) – 2 and SD (strongly

disagree) – 1; was utilized. This sought the perception of respondents on the ascertained and validated problems of job placement for polytechnic marketing graduates. The instrument was validated by experts in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana. The marketing opportunities, employer’s roles and choice of employment influence as used for rating were tested for reliability with a 0.76 coefficient result – using the KR-21 formula.

One hundred and ninety-nine copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researcher personally and seven days were given for completion. One hundred and sixty-one copies of the questionnaire were returned for usage, giving a response rate of 81%.

The research questions were analyzed using mean statistics while the hypotheses were analyzed using the Chi-square (X^2). Items with mean rating of 2.5 and above were accepted as significant for the study. A null hypothesis was accepted if the calculated X^2 is less than the table value while same was rejected where the calculated X^2 is greater than the table value.

The above rule is applied in the use of chi-square (Olaitan, 1988 and Ezewu, 1989).

3. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In line with the research questions and hypotheses, results of this study were presented in the table below:

Table 1. Marketers’ mean Rating of Available Job Opportunities for Polytechnic Marketing Graduates.

S/No Variables	Mean	Remark
1. Marketing Research Opportunities	3.0	Accept
2. Customer/Market Analyst	3.0	Accept
3. Purchasing Agent/Buyer	2.3	Reject
4. Product/Brand Manager	2.4	Reject
5. Packaging Specialists	3.6	Accept
6. Retailing Opportunities	2.4	Reject
7. Advertising Opportunities	3.5	Accept
8. Marketing cost/Revenue Analyst	1.8	Reject
9. Customer Relations/Consumer affairs	3.8	Accept
10. Physical distribution Opportunities	3.3	Accept
11. Personal sales Opportunities	2.7	Accept
12. Marketing Computer Analyst	2.5	Accept
GRAND MEAN	2.7	ACCEPT

An observation of the above revealed that the respondents generally accepted that there are employment opportunities available for marketing graduates to be placed on by employers. This can be inferred from the grand mean of 2.7. The variables accepted by them

include: customer relations/consumer affairs (3.8), packaging specialists (3.6), advertising opportunities (3.5), and physical distribution (3.3), among others. They did not accept variables like marketing cost/revenue analysis (1.8), retailing opportunities (2.4), purchasing agent/buyer (2.3), and product/brand manager (2.4). This is because their means fall below the decision rule of 2.5 and above.

Table 2. Marketers' Mean Rating of the Roles of Employers in their Job Placement.

S/No. Variables	Mean	Remark
1. Decision on available vacancy to filled	3.8	Accept
2. Matching graduates with job openings	3.7	Accept
3. Good knowledge of labour market functions	3.7	Accept
4. Advice graduates on best job fitting	3.6	Accept
5. Making physical work condition conducive	3.7	Accept
GRAND MEAN	3.7	ACCEPT

Table 3. Determinants of Choice of Employment as Rated by Marketers.

S/No. Variables	Mean	Remark
1. Acquisition of skill to meet the challenges in the business world	3.4	Accept
2. The curriculum covered in school	2.8	Accept
3. Teacher skill adopted during training	2.4	Reject
4. Involvement in practical work/tasks	3.5	Accept
5. Career awareness and preparation	3.1	Accept
6. Indecision	3.1	Accept
GRAND MEAN	3.1	ACCEPT

From the above table it can be observed that roles to be played by employers in placing Polytechnic marketing graduates are numerous and that the marketers accepted all the

rules as necessary for the graduates to perform well on their job positions. This endorsement can be drawn from the high 3.7 grand mean of the table which is above the acceptable decision rule of 2.5.

The above table with a grand mean of 3.1 revealed that the marketers accepted the listed factors as determinants of their choice of marketing employment. However, the teaching techniques employed by their lecturers were not necessarily seen as a determining factor. This can be inferred from the calculated 2.4 mean which falls below the decision rule of 2.5. The graduates involvement in practical work/tasks (3.5) and skill acquisition for meeting the challenges of the world business market (3.4) were rated highest on the list of factors determining the graduates' choice of employment.

Table 4. Summary of X^2 of Responses by Marketers Regarding their Perception of Job Placement of Polytechnic Marketing Graduates.

S/No.	Variables	Calculated X^2	Table X^2	Remark
1.	Employment opportunities	195.79	47.37	Reject
2.	Role of employers	1.17	21.03	Accept
3.	Choice of employment	21.90	25.00	Accept

The above table result revealed that there is an agreement by all the respondents that employment opportunities abound for marketing graduates of the polytechnics. This is reflected in the calculated chi-square of 195.79 which is higher than the table value of 47.37. The null hypothesis of no significant agreement in rating of respondents that there are available job placements for the marketing graduates ($= 0.05$) was therefore rejected.

Also revealed was the fact that respondents are in agreement that level of qualification is not a determinant on the role of employment in job placement for the marketing graduates. This statement is justified by the calculated X^2 of 1.17 which is lower than the table value of 21.03 (denominator of 5 and numerator of 4). The null hypothesis was however, accepted.

Finally, the marketers agreed that the listed factors do not necessarily affect choice of employment by the marketers. The null hypothesis of no agreement over the factors influencing choice of employment according to level of marketers' qualification was accepted because the calculated X^2 of 21.90 is lower than the table value of 25.00.

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS

Findings of this study revealed that the job positions such as marketing research, customer analysis, packaging specialists, retailing opportunities, advertising opportunities, customer relation/consumer affairs, physical distribution personal sales opportunities and marketing computer analyst are available for the polytechnic marketing/business graduates. This appears in line with the opinions of Chekitan and Schultz (2005) as well as Samiee and

Roth (1993) that the supply-chain management concept which requires a high level of co-ordination among the buying units consisting of components of manufacturing division (who are in essence internal suppliers, that is marketers to the core manufacturing unit), external suppliers and manufacturing can be effectively ensured only by staff who are both qualified and experienced – but first qualified. Of course, while all employers would like to hire a superman or a wonder-woman, they are also impressed with candidates who know what they want to do and are looking for a place where they can fit in and make a reasonable contribution. On the other hand, employee perception of the job position offered him may determine whether or not the job would be accepted (Donovan and Rositer, 1982) and also Lusch and Serpkenci (1990) who discovered in a research that positive association exists between external locus of control and tension-producing role perceptions.

The role of employers in marketing graduate placement was discovered to include ensuring availability of vacancy, matching of the graduates with job openings, understanding of labour markets and their functions, conducive physical work condition and advertising graduates on best fitting jobs. This is in line with the views of McCarthy (1980). That this would help ensure better an effective placement is really not in doubt since an enabling environment would have been created by this.

On factors that influence marketing graduates' choice of employment, results revealed that the fear of meeting the demands of the job (due to inadequate curriculum coverage) often led to rejection of jobs offered. Also, indecision on the part of graduates as well as ignorance of what a job placement has to offer; all determine choice of employment by Polytechnic Marketing graduates.

These findings may have informed the NBTE (2004), Ogundele (1990) and Larry (1983) insistence and suggestions that laboratory practical experience, career awareness and effective coverage of the curriculum constitute a vital key towards ensuring proven catalyst in the marketing job placement of our labour market. It also projects the fact that the Nigerian society sees education for and about business to be more relevant for societal material desires and economic response pattern in order to satisfy the yearnings of individuals personally; whereas the firms note trends, opportunities and threats for derivable values. Here, herd behaviour whereby individual buyers believe that others' demand of products is indication of their good value are limited/reduced.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that a better job placement for Polytechnic Marketing graduates would help solve some of the problems faced by the sector and the economy as a whole. These problems include the fact that non-professionals handling the marketing sector would reduce the expected effectiveness and efficiency plus the fact that the proper placement would ensure higher productivity while reducing job mobility and increasing job satisfaction. Also, career exploration and adequate coverage of the marketing curriculum was seen to be important in order for the graduates to feel eligible and take up the right job placement for them.

The study recommended the following for proper implementation of marketing/business education programmes in our Polytechnic system;

- Intensive laboratory experience (through all available markets/offices) and simulation techniques should be adopted for adequate curriculum coverage of the marketing programme.
- Employers of labour should be made aware by Industrial Training Fund (ITF) of the job positions/role models (employment opportunities) for marketing/business education graduates so that the distributive sector of the economy could be maximized.
- The advertisement functions performed by “dogamans” International Limited (bus trading and street trading of certain products, especially drugs) should be properly put in place by the Polytechnic marketing graduates for effectiveness and efficiency in their profession.
- Career awareness as well as entrepreneurial education should be taught to students of marketing in order to enable them fill their rightful pride of place in the society and to contribute their quota towards economic development.
- Intensive Computer utilization in the tracking and branding of products should form part of portfolio for marketing training in our institutions.

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