

Does the quality of the teaching have a relationship with the employability of University graduates?

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ABSTRACT

The employability of university graduates is a concern for higher education stakeholders globally and Uganda is also concerned due to high unemployment rates post-graduation. Not much has been written about the relationship between quality of teaching and the employability of graduates from selected Universities in South Western Uganda. This study aims to establish this relationship in selected universities in south western Uganda. A correlational study collected data from 512 participants, including graduates, employers, university lecturers, administrators, and officers from directorate of quality assurance of National council for higher education. Data on staff quality, teaching methodologies, quality of assessment, learning environment, and employability were collected. Structural equation modelling (SEM) and SPSS version 21 was used to analyze associations between predictor and outcome variables.

The findings derived from conducting this research demonstrate the presence of a significant statistical association between the quality of teaching and the employability of university graduates.

This suggests that by ensuring that the teaching faculty utilizes relevant pedagogical strategies that promote hands-on participation and the development of problem-solving abilities, the likelihood of producing employable graduates would be significantly enhanced. It is very important that stakeholders in higher education make it a priority to keep a high standard of instruction to attract potential employers to engage in the education and up-skilling of graduates and facilitate their integration into the workforce.

KEYWORDS; Quality teaching, higher education, teaching, employability

I. INTRODUCTION

The employability of graduates is a subject of great concern for numerous higher education stakeholders in Uganda and across the globe. This is a result of many graduates being unable to secure employment upon completion of their studies. Universities face pressure from the government and labour market who complain that graduates' skills do not match labour market requirements. In a way of addressing this concern, higher education institutions are expected to produce graduates who possess the skills that may help them secure employment (Bridgstock, 2017; Suleman, 2016). However, there are high rates of youth unemployment, underemployment, low-quality job placements, and a low rate of transition from studentship to working graduate in most less-developed countries, including Uganda (Laura, 2013; Kiranda et al., 2017).

The concept of employability is looked at as the capacities of the graduates to not only secure a graduate job placement but also to maintain it and advance within that employment (Godfrey et al., 2021). In addition, (Small et al., 2018) examined employability as composed of a series of proficiencies, knowledge, comprehension, and personal attributes that increase the likelihood of an individual selecting a job that aligns with their contentment.

Furthermore, (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005) posited employability as the possession of qualities and competencies by an individual that facilitate the realization of their aspirations and potential in the workplace. Within the confines of this study, employability was defined as an individual's possession of skills, qualities, and abilities that enable them to procure a job within the labor market, while also being capable of flourishing and sustaining said employment for a prolonged period.

The issue of unemployability among university graduates is rooted in the fundamental principles of the current state of higher education and the academic performance of students. This predicament is a global phenomenon, as the labor market continues to grapple with the challenge of inadequate graduate employability. A pertinent example is a study conducted in Vietnam, which revealed that employers were dissatisfied with the caliber of new entrants in the labor market (Tran, 2017). Numerous other academics have also observed a disparity between the training received by graduates and the needs of the labor market (Brewer, 2013; Walker et al., 2019). Considering the high demand for university education and the substantial investments made in students, they must acquire skills that will make them employable upon completion of their studies (Su & Zhang, 2015; Godfrey et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022).

Several scholars have observed that employability represents a pressing concern in contemporary society (Abas & Imam, 2016; Bhola, 2017; Tentama et al., 2019). However, they agree that Higher education institutions demonstrate a strong dedication to promoting the growth of individuals who possess the necessary qualifications for employment. Education is widely perceived as a vehicle for augmenting the quality of the labour force, thereby enabling individuals to gain entry to various career prospects (Sahade & Ngampo, 2021). To this end, the workforce is equipped with relevant skills through the teaching and learning process.

In a study carried out at the University of Western Cape on engineering graduates, it was found that there was a significant mismatch between the content of the curriculum and the demands of the labour market (Jowah & Beretu, 2019).

Furthermore, in a recent investigation of graduate employability skills in East Africa, (Guàrdia et al., 2022) highlighted a discrepancy between the skills provided by educational institutions and those sought by employers. This disparity raises questions about the effectiveness of the teaching methods employed to prepare graduates for the workforce. Specifically, the question of whether the quality of teaching has any bearing on the employability of graduates is still being asked.

The evaluation of the standard of education, in terms of teaching and learning, has been bestowed with a tool of measurement in Uganda. The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) has outlined the parameters of this assessment, which are enumerated below as explicated in NCHE (2014).

- Adherence to or improving on minimum requirements for the course of study in terms of design, content, duration, contact hours, and assessment.
- Relevancy of what is taught.
- Methods of examining or assessing students and considering examination regulations.
- Considering the quality of entering students by looking at admission criteria.
- Appeal mechanism for students
- Access to information by students (Library, Science Laboratories, Computer Laboratories, Internet access, and books.

Knight & Yorke(2002) have postulated that within the context of curriculum development, the establishment of a well-designed program is integral to the cultivation of a learning culture amongst students. To effectively achieve the aim of employment creation among graduates, the curricular aims, design, learning, teaching, and assessment must be cohesively aligned towards that common objective. The quality of teaching has been assessed in terms of the quality of the staff, teaching methods, the quality of the assessment, and the quality of the learning environment.

In the pursuit of understanding the intricacies of teaching quality and employability of graduates in South Western Uganda, it is imperative to note that while certain scholars such as Williams (1998) and Kelly et al., (2022) have highlighted the employability skills required by graduates, the topic of teaching quality and its impact on graduate employability remains vastly underexplored.

This investigation sought to examine the correlation between the quality of teaching and the employability of graduates. The inquiry that directed this research was formulated as follows: What is the relationship between the quality of teaching and learning and the employability of graduates from the selected universities in southwestern Uganda?

Literature review

Theoretical Review

This study was guided by Human Capital theory (HCT), which describes how education enhances a person's skill level and provides economic benefits to both individuals and society(Sweetland, 1996). HCT is instrumental in improving the production capacity of a population and increasing the efficiency of workers(Okemakinde, 2008; Phillips & Gully, 2013). Quality education develops graduates' knowledge and skills that make them employable. Human Capital theory further addresses the relationship between higher education attributes and labor market outcomes (Bridgstock, 2017) and these include quality of Curriculum, quality of teaching, quality of students among other, and labour market outcomes(Harry et al., 2018). Therefore, investment in quality education is necessary to produce highly employable graduates. Human Capital investment improves human capital effectiveness, promotes innovativeness, and enhances performance.

Furthermore, Human Capital investment involves improving human capital effectiveness through training, education, knowledge, and skills, which enhances firm performance(Marimuthu et al., 2009). Employers perceive labor as a factor of production(Jonck, 2015) and use human capital to refer to the quality of labor. Education imparts skills that increase individual efficiency and lead to higher output, wages, and employment opportunities(Sharma,2016; Marginson, 2019). Human Capital theory further suggests that education leads to the acquisition of productive skills, knowledge, and other attributes that have economic value to individuals and nations(Godfrey et al., 2021). The requirements of the labor market keep changing, and higher education needs to adjust its teaching process to remain relevant.

Concept of Higher Education

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have played a significant role in enhancing employability by redefining the concept and integrating subjective dimensions of employability. The Bologna process has contributed to this redefinition by emphasizing competency-based approaches and individualization (Bonnard, 2020). To enhance graduates' employability, HEIs have implemented initiatives such as impact sourcing (ImS), particularly in the global business services (GBS) industry (Aman, 2021). However, concerns have been raised concerning the insufficiency of graduate skills and thus employability skills development is still needed (Guàrdia et al., 2021).

Higher education refers to the level of education and training beyond the secondary level that is provided in colleges, universities, and other institutions (Monkut, 1998; Altbach et al., 2009; Sunder, 2016). Nagaraj (2018) further elaborated on this concept, viewing higher education as the level of education that awards academic degrees and diplomas and this includes universities, colleges, and other degree-awarding institutions. In Uganda, HEIs are categorized into three types of higher education, including universities, other degree-awarding institutions, and tertiary institutions (colleges) (NCHE, 2018). For this study, only education attained from universities at the degree level was considered.

Higher education institutions bear the responsibility of integrating employability skills into their curricula and implementing programs that are relevant to the workplace. Such programs provide students with an understanding of the skills that employers demand (Clarke, 2018). In this study, the human capital theory posits that the quality of higher education will influence the employability of graduates. This holds because investing in education enables individuals to develop human skills, increase productivity, and improve their employability.

Therefore, higher education should equip graduates with productive skills that not only increase their chances of employment but also contribute to the nation's GDP. If universities in southwestern Uganda prioritize the quality of teaching, they can enhance graduate employability and thus contribute to the overall development of the region.

Quality of Teaching

The term "quality" varies according to different stakeholders. Academicians define it as excellence with high standards (TUCEA, 2015), while students and employers see it as the fitness of purpose (Akareem & Hossain, 2016; Sunder, 2016), Government and taxpayers perceive it as value for money (NCHE, 2014). Quality is also viewed as products and services that meet certain standards and requirements (Cheng et al., 2022; Schindler et al., 2015; Harvey, 2005). In this study, quality is taken to mean the fitness of purpose and the provision of educational products with minimal defects that bring satisfaction to the user. Quality of teaching is crucial in education and refers to effective and engaging instruction (Martin et al., 2022) by knowledgeable and committed academic staff.

NCHE (2014) Uganda by the National Council for Higher Education considered the Quality of teaching and learning based on the given yardstick as listed below in terms of;

- Adherence to or improving on minimum requirements for the course of study in terms of design, content, duration, contact hours, and assessment.
- Relevancy of what is taught.
- Methods of examining or assessing students and considering examination regulations.
- Considering the quality of entering students by looking at admission criteria.
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Institutions of Higher learning and education policymakers consider the standards by NCHE as a regulatory body to evaluate the quality of teaching.

Quality of teaching calls for adhering to minimum standards set by the National Council for Higher Education, and using new methods to deliver knowledge and skills to learners. This involves methods of teaching / Instruction, quality of Instructors, resources, and learning Environment.

Relationship between quality of teaching and employability

Employability of graduates is a concern of many education stakeholders and in the study carried out in public universities in Cameroon, the quality of teaching was found to have a significant impact on the employability of graduates at $R = 0.412^{**}$, $P = 0.000$ (Stephen & Joseph, 2020). Also in another study, it was established that the quality of teachers strongly affects the quality of training and the chances of graduates finding employment (Walker et al., 2019).

However, the literature shows that the quality of teachers can affect the training and employability of graduates (Smith, 2018). To improve the quality of teaching, partnerships between initial teacher education providers and schools have been suggested. These partnerships have been linked to quality assurance and auditing cycles, which can contribute to the employability of graduates (F. Majid, 2016).

In another instance, Tracer studies have also revealed a positive correlation between the quality of education programs and the employability of graduates. The skills and competencies acquired from universities are useful in their current employment, as reported in a recent study by Posadas et al., (2021).

Boateng et al., (2015) in his in Ghana, graduates revealed that the quality of their training and programs adequately prepared them for the world of work. They acquire generic skills such as communication skills, critical thinking skills, computer skills, problem-solving skills, entrepreneurial and research skills during their training.

In a study on the Influence of Multi-teaching strategy intervention programs on college students' absorptive capacity and employability, it was established that problem-based learning positively correlates with student employability (Peng et al., 2021). In this problem, problem-solving skills which are much needed in the world of work are acquired. Other studies have identified that engaging employers in teaching-learning process where field-based people are involved in teaching by inviting them as guest lecturers, sending learners to learn from the workplace and others improves students' skill acquisition (Stanbury, 2020).

This helps graduates handle situational issues at the workplace which increases their chances of progressing on the job.

The cross-sectional survey of college students to establish whether specific pedagogies and problem-based teaching improve student employability emphasized that for employability development, expert career guidance has to be availed to students together with disciplinary knowledge (Li et al., 2020) This shows that it is not only the teaching methods but also the guidance on how to handle work-related issues and personal character. Also in the study by Kinash et al., (2018) to establish whether university students, alumni, educators, and employers link assessment and graduate employability, educators noted that there was a link while students, alumni, and employers appeared not to have been apprised of that link.

Furthermore, (Kelly et al., 2022) in their study on "Traditional Exams, 21st Century Employability Skills, and COVID-19" noted that there is a need for Universities to consider alternative forms of assessment using practical examples that may bring out more valid methods of improving graduate employability. In this, the applications of knowledge other than recall are crucial in the labor market and increase the level of employability of graduates.

The quality of education provided in educational institutions depends on the conducive learning environment and sufficiency of educational facilities such as access to computer networks, library facilities,

lecture rooms, and laboratories (NCHE, 2014). It was revealed that graduates who studied in an activating learning environment have more generic and reflective competencies than those from a conventional learning environment (Vaatstra & Vries, 2018). This was in line with an earlier by Patria (2014) who investigated the effects of the learning environment on graduates' competencies and found a significant positive influence of learning environment on graduate competencies. This promotes competencies like working in a team which are crucial in the career of graduates.

Concerning the quality of the Academic staff, the National Council for Higher Education has set the standards as the quality of academic staff is key to the quality of the university and its graduates. The standards regarding recruitment of staff, promotion to various academic ladders, and dismissal are in place to ensure quality (NCHE, 2014).

Also, a study by UNESCO, (2018) indicated that universities were willing to enhance the employability of graduates by providing high-quality academic programs by aligning the program with the market needs, offering competency-based education, and working with internal and external stakeholders as a way of enhancing employability.

Universities have tried to address public concerns, for example, a study in South Africa established that there was a struggle by academics to integrate employability skills into the curriculum (Mtawa et al., 2021). A study on how institutions in Malaysia embed employability in curriculum found ambiguity in the assessment of generic skills (Fahimirad et al., 2019) while one carried out in Taiwan on how to increase teachers' capacity to design pedagogy by employment-related material in the teaching system remain unclear (Li et al., 2020). A descriptive study designed to evaluate the employability skills of final-year students and their corresponding perspectives in Tanzania showed that there exists a disparity in prioritization of skills between employers and students (Nuru, 2016)

Furthermore, it was revealed that the incorporation of entrepreneurship into education can address employability issues (Kiranda et al., 2017). However, concerns persist over some graduates' failure to acquire the necessary skills for employability. The correlation between teaching quality and graduate employability is a significant concern in higher education. Universities are encouraged to enhance the quality of teaching and develop students' practical ability, professional competence, innovation ability, and comprehensive quality to enhance graduate employability (Agemaiti et al., 2015)

Quality of teaching is a crucial factor in determining the employability of graduates. Therefore, it is important to ensure that teachers are qualified and that initial teacher education providers partner with schools to improve the quality of training. Graduates' generic skills are also important in their employability, highlighting the need for education programs to equip them with relevant skills and competencies.

Many studies have been carried out on the quality of teaching in relation to education programs, the quality of teachers, teaching strategy and career guidance, and how the learning environment leads to the development of generic skills.

There exists a gap in how the quality of teaching in terms of its dimensions; quality of teaching methods, quality of assessment, quality of staff, and quality of learning environment is related to the employability of graduates.

Thus the a need to establish a relationship between the quality of teaching and the employability of graduates.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study utilized a Correlational survey design to gather pertinent data via the distribution of self-administered questionnaires to University graduates, lecturers, and employers. Additionally, interviews were conducted with esteemed individuals including university Deans, heads of Department, Academic Registrars, Quality assurance Officers, and Technocrats from the National Council for Higher Education. Correlational research design is a method used to evaluate the relationship between multiple variables (Sekaran and Bougie,

2009; Oso and Onen, 2008). In this particular study, Correlational design was deemed appropriate and utilized as an effective measure for analyzing the relationship between quality teaching, learning in higher education, and the employability of graduates from select universities in South Western Uganda.

Population and Sampling

This study was conducted on a target population comprised of 715 graduates, 162 employers, 48 lecturers, 11 department heads, 2 quality assurance directors/officers, 2 academic registrars, and 4 officials from the NCHE Quality Assurance directorate. A sample size of 512 respondents was deemed appropriate and selected according to Yamane's (1967) formula

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

In this study, the sample size (n) was determined based on the population size (N) and the margin of error (e), which was set at 0.05. The sample size consisted of 324 graduates, 115 key employers from where graduates are employed, and 48 lecturers with the aid of a probability simple random sampling technique. A purposive sampling technique was also used to select 6 faculty deans, 11 heads of department, 2 quality assurance directors, 2 Academic registrars, and 4 officers from the quality assurance directorate of NCHE.

Data collection methods and tools

A survey utilizing a questionnaire was employed to gather data from graduates, lecturers, and key employers. The survey method was executed through structured interviews and questionnaires and proved efficient in terms of time, energy, and cost. Respondents were presented with a semi-structured questionnaire, and tasked with reading and interpreting the questions as per their expectations, facilitating the survey method (Kumar, 2011).

The interview method was utilized to obtain opinions from key informants, including Heads of Department, Faculty Deans, Academic Registrars, Quality assurance officers, and technocrats from the NCHE Directorate of Quality Assurance. These participants were interviewed due to their direct responsibility over academic processes, procedures, and policy management, making them valuable sources of information for the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with an Interview Schedule featuring both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Additional questions were asked as long as they were significant, with Interview guides used to obtain detailed information on the study variables and maintain control over the line of questioning (Bryman, 2008).

A range of documents, including University records such as accredited program books, admission records, timetables, teaching records, and graduation records, were reviewed alongside National Council for Higher Education records, journal papers, and both published and unpublished books. Specifically, the documentary review was utilized to examine the quality of academic staff, the quality of students, and the quality of teaching and learning. Checking course outline content against the accredited program book established whether it was in line with the approved NCHE curriculum. The teaching timetables were checked to establish hours allocated to the course unit, and sampled student files were considered to check if they met the admission criteria. The secondary data method of documentary review helped substantiate data with other sources of information and obtain thoughtful data from informants who gave it enough time and attention while compiling.

Results

Following data collection, data were cleansed and analyzed using SPSS and AMOS version 21 software. Content analysis was used for qualitative analysis, SPSS was responsible for data entry while AMOS was used for factor analysis, regression analysis, reliability tests, and examining relationships among study variables.

To ensure questionnaire correctness, validity tests were performed, including pre-testing with experts and calculating the content validity index (CVI). The results of the content validity analysis revealed that the obtained CVI for quality of teaching and employability (0.833 and 0.815, respectively) were above the recommended value of 0.7 (F. A. Majid et al., 2022) (Amin, 2005), indicating that the questionnaire items were relevant.

Exploratory factor analysis was used to test construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The study identified variable patterns and linear relationships among items and components using principle component analysis (Smith et al., 2018) and varimax rotation. Varimax rotation maximized the dispersion of loadings within factors (Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 2015). Only elements with Eigenvalues greater than one and loadings higher than 0.5 were retained using the Kaiser criterion. The present investigation has fulfilled the prerequisites of exploratory factor analysis because the magnitude of the sample was 512, which substantially exceeded the minimum requirement of 150. Moreover, only those items that evinced loadings exceeding 0.5 from the rotated solution were taken into account, as is evidenced in Table 2. Furthermore, the KMO values were greater than .6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was highly significant ($p < .001$) for all constructs, thus attesting to the fact that the model is well-suited to the data (Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 2015).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed as the measurement model in this study to assess the Quality of Teaching. The model utilized a four-factor construct incorporating Quality of Staff, Teaching Methods, Quality of Assessment, and Learning Environment. The results of the analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.

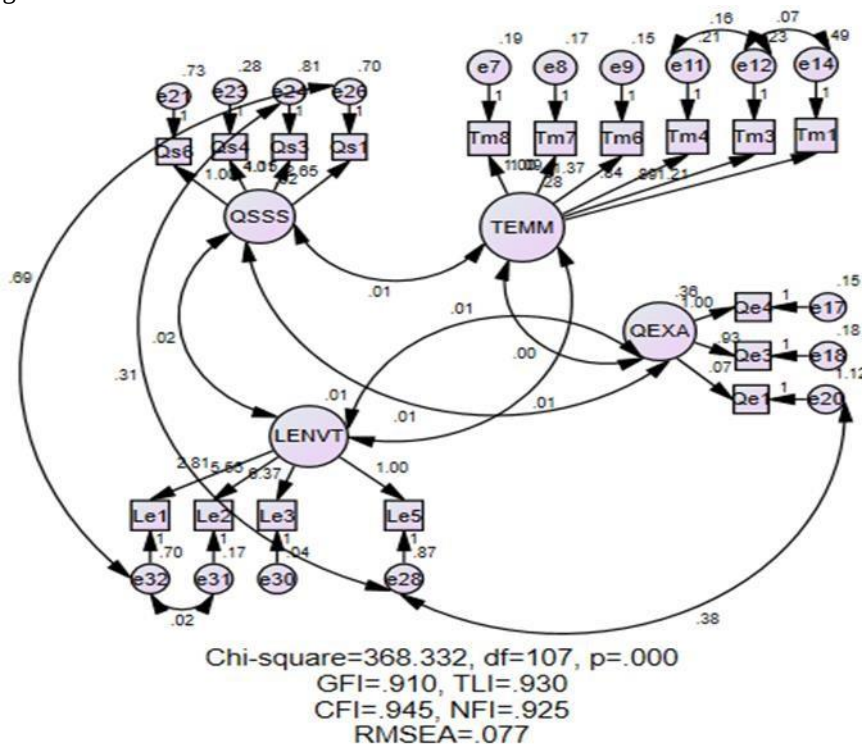


Figure 1: CFA for Quality of Teaching

Figure 1 displays acceptable fit indices from Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The initial results showed significant standardized parameter estimates, but poor fit indices. Items were iteratively removed to meet acceptable criteria while maintaining a parsimonious model. Misspecifications were revealed in various items ('Qs2', 'Tm2', 'Tm5', 'Tm9', 'Tm10', 'Tm11', 'Tm12', 'Tm13', 'Tm14', 'Qe2', 'Qe5', 'Qe6', 'Le4', 'Le6', 'Le7' and 'Le8') which were removed. The retained items were significant and had standardized factor loadings higher than the recommended level of 0.50 and thus, the meanings of the factors were preserved. Table 1 provides a detailed explanation through standardized regression estimates of the retained quality of student items.

Table 1: Standardized weights for quality of teaching

Code	Items	Standardized regression estimates	C.R (t)
Teaching methods			
Tm8	I use adequate learning materials	0.775	
Tm7	Course outlines used are consistent with the approved curriculum	0.812	17.271
Tm6	The student assessment is objective and trustworthy	0.884	18.807
Tm4	Feedback on students' assignments and tests is given promptly after marking	0.699	14.534
Tm3	learners' communication skills are developed during study as we allow them to express themselves	0.707	14.716
Tm1	The courses are taught in reference to the job market	0.678	14.038
Quality of assessment			
Qe4	The exams assess the cognitive skills	0.836	
Qe3	I use progressive assessments/continuous assessment tests	0.796	4.642
Qe1	The student assessment is consistent in time and between programs	0.739	0.773
Quality of staff			
Qs5	We usually get refresher courses in teaching skills	0.158	
Qs4	I have continued to study and add to my qualifications to handle course units	0.721	3.133
Qs3	I am handling with confidence	0.173	2.344
Qs1	I use a minimum of 3 hours per week for each course unit to conduct Lectures	0.74	2.978
Learning environment			
Le5	Learners who attend my Lectures are equipped with skills relevant to the field of work	0.624	
Le3	We have a better sound system in our lecture rooms	0.966	2.695
Le2	There is a quiet environment for reading	0.845	2.693
Le1	The school library is well located in a conducive environment	0.367	2.559

Achieved Fit Indices

CMIN/DF	RMS EA	GFI	CFI	TLI	NFI
3.442	0.077	0.91	0.945	0.93	0.925

(368.332 / 107)

The CFA outcomes demonstrate that the standardized parameter estimates for all retained indicators were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and loaded on this factor as shown in Table 2. Furthermore, the results validate the model with appropriate model fit statistics for this construct measure. The composite reliability was found to be 0.792, which is considerably above the acceptable level for scales tested in a new context (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), while the AVE is 0.803.

Relationship between Quality of Teaching and employability of graduates

In this study, correlation analysis was used to effectively demonstrate the interdependent nature between the quality of teaching and the graduates' employability among graduates in selected universities in southwestern Uganda, expanding on the descriptive statistics. In addition, it highlights the association between the variables of quality of teaching and their effect on both the quality of teaching and employability. Table 2 provides the summarized outcomes.

Table 2: Correlation matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Quality of staff (1)	1					
Teaching methods (2)	.108*	1				
Quality of assessment (3)	.090	.031	1			
Learning environment (4)	.705**	.149**	.207**	1		
Quality of teaching (5)	.721**	.524**	.521**	.798**	1	
Employability (6)	.543**	.175	.390**	.452**	.560**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The findings presented in Table 2 demonstrate a statistically significant positive association between the quality of teaching and the employability outcomes of graduates from selected Universities in South Western Uganda. This positive relationship was observed with a 99% level of confidence ($r = 0.560$, $p < .01$). Further analysis shows that all dimensions of quality of teaching are statistically significant apart from insignificant teaching methods. This was further confirmed by regression results testing the hypothesis H_0 Quality of teaching has no significant relationship with employability of graduates from selected universities in southwestern Uganda. The model revealed that $\beta = 0.309$, R^2 Change = .078; $F(1, 82) = 82.981$, $p < .001$. Thus the null hypotheses is rejected and accept the alternative. Quality of teaching has a significant relationship with employability of graduates from selected universities in south western Uganda.

This further implies that a unit increase in quality of teaching would result in to 0.309 units increase in employability of graduates.

Also from the conducted interviews, concerning the quality of teaching in higher education, it is widely acknowledged that high-quality higher education has a positive impact on the employability of graduates, and the quality of teaching plays a crucial role in this regard.

One participant echoed that: *The skilled staff have the ability to aid learners understand the complex concepts, give necessary guidance and mentorship, actively engage learners in the learning process and incorporate practical experience which improves employability of learners. In line with this, the other participants said that most of the our work done is hands on and it's what the labor market needs For*

instance, problem based learning helps students to solve real life problems. Presentations are also key and make students more confident and professionals . Hands on in computer labs and using practical experiments while teaching, simulations and handling problem-based assignments in groups promote skills needed by employers.

Discussion of results

This investigation focused on the correlation between the quality of teaching and the employability of university graduates. The quality of teaching was evaluated based on the quality of staff, teaching methodologies, quality of assessment, and learning environment.

The investigation conducted showed that the employability of graduates was significantly influenced by the quality of staff, quality of assessment, and learning environment at a 99% level of confidence, which were identified as predictors. Conversely, the teaching methods were not a significant predictor, indicating its negligible effect on graduate employability. Higher education institutions should prioritize teaching skills refresher courses, learning environments that provide learners with a conducive environment, learning skills that are relevant to their field of work, and continued education of staff to enhance graduate employability. This finding is in agreement with research results on the importance of soft skills in an industrial training program, where employers acknowledge the vital role of such training in enhancing employability skills (Khalid et al., 2014). More so, the study's practical and field-based teaching allows learners to acquire the skills needed in the labor market. Also Peng et al., (2021) in the study on the impact of the Multi-teaching strategy intervention program on college students' absorptive capacity and employability, it was established that problem-based learning positively correlates with students employability. Additionally, Rohanai et al., (2020) also support problem-based learning as a way of instruction as it develops students' employability skills. Continued staff development is crucial in improving the quality of teaching and hence graduate employability.

The quality of assessment and graduate employability had a significant relationship. Assessing students' skills; in problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity is highly beneficial in the labour market. Therefore, any improvement in assessing cognitive and psychomotor skills using a progressive assessment that is consistent over time, relevant, and cross-programmatic will translate into improved graduate employability. Lecturers must strive for quality assessment that translates into good performance and practical orientation, thereby enhancing the employability of graduates. This is supported by Kelly et al.,(2022) work that examined the relationship between examinations and the enhancement of graduate employability through problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

Idris Ali & Rashid, (2013) noted that different methods of instruction such as problem-based, context-based, student-centered, and computer-based teaching methods were significant predictors of employability skills among students of technical schools. This is not in agreement with results of this study where teaching methods were insignificant and cannot explain the employability of graduates. This is inconsistency with the findings of Rohanai et al., (2020) who also found a positive relationship between employability skills and the problem-based teaching method, while Smith et al.,(2018) recommended that incorporating practical activities and real-life experiences into the learning process aid students in concretizing and applying what they have learned in real life.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research findings indicate a significant positive relationship between the quality of teaching and the employability of graduates from selected universities in South Western Uganda.

Quality teaching is vital to impart skills and competencies that are relevant in the world of work, and this subsequently improves the employability level of graduates.

Higher education stakeholders have to continue emphasizing the importance of quality of teaching staff in facilitating quality of teaching, leading to the acquisition of relevant skills and competencies, and ultimately improving graduate employability.

The significance of quality assessment in evaluating whether learners have acquired the taught skills and competencies was also revealed. The universities need to ensure students' assessment is given due attention as it produces grades that signal to employer the quality of graduate to be employed.

The study discovered that the quality of staff, quality of assessment, and learning environment are significant predictors of graduate employability at a 99% level of confidence. However, the teaching methods were found to be insignificant in influencing graduate employability. Therefore, it is evident that in building graduates with employable skills, the quality of teaching in higher education is crucial.

It is recommended that Universities and other educational Institutions prioritize the quality of staff, learning environment, and assessment to generate graduates that are suitable for the contemporary job market.

Areas for Further Research

This study focused on the quality of teaching and employability of graduates from selected universities in South Western Uganda, and the results may apply to university graduates. However, the study was limited to selected universities in South Western Uganda, and it is possible to generalize the findings to all tertiary institutions. Furthermore, the study looked at graduates irrespective of the status of the university. The funding of university activities matters in the curriculum implementation, and a comparative study could be carried out between the employability of graduates from government universities and private universities.

Ethical Approval

The study was cleared by the Mbarara University of Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee (under Ref: MUREC1/7) and the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (Ref: SS1275ES). Informed consent was sought from the participants during data collection.

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