Quality Assurance and Employability of Graduates in a Ghanaian University

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Abstract

The study examined factors important for professional success of graduates. It examined the state of graduates' employment considering generic skills acquired during course of studentship at the Wisconsin International University College. The relevance academic programmes offered by the University College in helping graduates' maintain their jobs was also explored. An online based questionnaire was used to tap graduates views on their employment status and factors that have made them into successful professionals. Two hundred and thirty graduates who had graduated from the University College from 2000 to 2012 completed the questionnaire. The study revealed that 84% of graduates are in gainful employment while 2.5% report they had never worked since graduation. Also 13.5% report that they are not employed at the time of completing the questionnaire. Fifty six percent of graduates are employed in the private sector with 17% occupying top management positions, 40% in mid level management positions and 14% as first line managers. Communication skills, critical thinking skills, computer skills, problem solving skills, entrepreneurial and research skills are mentioned as generic skills picked up during their training in WIUC that has helped them remain successful in their professions. Quality teaching, core course mix and quality of student workload are mentioned among others as strengths of the WIUC programmes. It was interesting to note that in spite of the weaknesses observed by graduates in facilities, support services, and WIUC's linkages with industry, graduates are still very confident that the quality of training, of teaching and learning and the programmes WIUC offered them did prepare them adequately for the world of work.

Keywords: Quality assurance, Employability, Graduates, Generic skills, Computer skills, Student workload

Contents

1. Introduction

Volante-Yabut (2009), observes that education is central to development and empowers people as well as strengthening nations. Education thus becomes one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality as well as helping to lay the foundation for sustained economic growth. Quality in higher education has become a major issue as result of developments in globalization affecting academic, commercial and political institutions of nations in the world. Academic institutions in Ghana are expected to have quality assurance mechanisms in place as a way of assuring government, the National Accreditation Board, parents and other stakeholders about the high standards of their programmes and their achievement through outcomes.

The major function of quality assurance departments and units in Ghanaian Universities is to monitor performance as well as ensure the achievement of quality outputs. There have been attempts in the literature to associate quality outputs in higher education to employability. Some of these researchers have confined the definition of employability to a consideration of the skills developed by students during their time in higher education. For example, Hillage and Pollard (1998) revealed that, employability involves two elements namely; graduate employability which they defined as a set of achievements (skills, understanding and personal attributes) that makes an individual more likely to gain employment and be fulfilled in their chosen occupations.

The other is the employability of university graduates , which involves developing the interrelationships between the university, its schools and services with the labour market and employers. Archer (2010) found among hotel managers he studied that, the majority of employment related skills learnt, in particular, communication, were developed whilst on a one year placement and were seen as more valuable than those learnt on a degree. Although the managers still recognised that some skills that were developed when they were on a degree programme are still important in a graduate's employability.

Sleap and Reed (2006) suggested that there is little feedback from recent graduates on the value of university experiences to their working life. In their study, recent physical education and sport science graduates reported that their university experiences had not helped them develop many work based skills and that additional work related skills such as team communication, presentation skills, time management and arguing skills should be included in the curriculum through small group work, work-related projects, debates and group presentations. The growing importance of generic skills (team communication, presentation skills, time management and negotiation skills in higher education has been underscored by Kemmis (1998).

He advances a debate about the purpose of university education and how to develop well educated persons who are both employable and capable of contributing to civil society. Reasons cited for the growing significance of generic skills includes reasons that traditional jobs have disappeared and people entering the job market need to have different attributes. Also that there is increasing evidence of demand from business and employer organizations for graduates to possess generic skills and other economic, technological and educational arguments that have brought generic skills to wider attention.

According to Woodhouse (2013), Quality Assurance (QA) relates to a number of stakeholders in Higher Education. These include students, institutions, employers, governments, and society. Students he says want to know which institution to choose; institutions want confirmation of their standing; employers want to know that graduates can hit the ground running; governmesnts want to know that their money is well spent and sometimes requires External Quality Agencies (EQAs) to drive institutions in particular directions; society wants a prestigious local institution; and all want QA decisions and outputs that are intelligible and useful.

It is therefore a case of great urgency for higher educational institutions especially in Ghana to investigate ways that can increase student opportunities to develop their employability skills within the curriculum. This study carried out by the Quality Assurance and Institutional Relations Unit (QAIRU) in 2012 sought to examine the relationship between the quality of education offered by the WIUC and the world of work. It considered the experiences of WIUC's graduates up to the year 2012 in the workplace. The specific objectives were as follows:

a. Explore the state of employment of graduates from the WIUC
b. Determine what factors are important for professional success of graduates taking into account factors such as generic skill qualification acquired during the course of study at WIUC and strength of academic programmes offered by the University College

2. Literature Review

2.1. Quality Assurance and Employability

A number of researchers have participated in the debate surrounding the relationship between quality assurance and employability of graduates in higher education (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey, 2001; Holmes, 2001; Knight, 2001; Knight and Yorke, 2003; Bridgstock, 2009; Baron, 2011). These debates among other things have worked together to influence traditional views about quality in higher education and how it is assured. These developments have resulted into the making of quality assurance in higher education a key objective of government policies and an important steering mechanism in higher education systems worldwide.

Conceptions of quality were categorized by Harvey and Green (1993), and were elaborated in the PHARE Manual of Quality Assurance: Procedures and Practices (1998). They include the following: Quality as excellence, quality as a fitness for purpose, quality as transformation, quality as threshold and quality as enhancement or improvement. Quality as "fitness of purpose" denotes the manner quality translates to the functions of an institution or "fitness for purpose" where the notion of quality of an institution is measurable through its mission statement with clearly defined aims (Volante-Yabut, 2009). According to Woodhouse (2013), International Standard's Organization (ISO) defined the quality audit as a three-part process: checking the suitability of the planned quality procedures in relation to the stated objectives, the conformity of the actual quality activities with the plans, and the effectiveness of the activities in achieving the stated objectives. This "quality loop" is often referred to using the initials OADRI for objectives, approach (e.g. plans), deployment (e.g. the actual activities), results (the consequences of all this planning

and activity), and improvement. Improvement refers to what is done if the loop is not closed (e.g. adjust the objectives, plans, or deployment) or if it is closed (perhaps set more ambitious objectives). Quality assurance mechanisms must therefore be implemented and monitored internally by the institution and by an external body.

From an institutional perspective, consideration has been given to the following in developing internal quality assurance (Volante-Yabut, 2009):

- Institutional quality framework and resources for managing and implementing quality systems,
- Internal norms and standards as well as performance indicators,
- Staff development on the conceptualization of the quality framework
- Capacity development.

Woodhouse (2013) notes that as organizations, generically referred to as "quality agencies" were set up, by governments, institutions, or private entities, they needed an "organizing principle commonly known as "accreditation" and or "audits". Accreditation stressed the "gatekeeper" role of an external quality agency (EQA), holding higher education institutions (HEIs) to threshold requirements. An audit permits greater diversity among institutions, but therefore usually presupposes that the institution has already exceeded some known threshold. Conventionally, accreditation has become associated with accountability of the institution (to someone, for something); and an audit is associated with (further) improvement of the institution above the threshold. However, an accreditation approach by the EQA can lead to suggestions for improvement; while an audit can focus on holding the institution accountable for achieving its stated published goals. Woodhouse (2013) further shows that, accreditation denotes the process or outcome of evaluating whether something, for example, an institution or program, qualifies for a certain status. The status may have implications for the institution itself (e.g. permission to operate) and/or its students (e.g. eligibility for grants) and/or its graduates (e.g. qualified for certain employment). In theory, he observes that output of an accreditation may be a yes or no or pass or fail decision and possible gradations. In Ghana the function of accreditation and external audit in Higher are both performed by the National Accreditation Board (NIB).

2.2. Ghana's Qualifications Frameworks

Qualification frameworks (QFs) have become the flavor of the day and that most countries that lack a QF are creating one. The core reason for this is to ensure consistency between institutions (Does a degree denote the same thing at all institutions in the country?) and, with that consistency, facilitate mobility of students (Woodhouse, 2013). According to Okae-Adjei (2012) cited by Boateng, 2014), Ghana's Qualifications Framework, employs a multiplicity of quality assurance models. These include; command and control model, the professional self-regulatory model and the market model with the command and control model seemingly playing a more important role. The activities of Tertiary institutions in Ghana are regulated by governmental bodies to ensure quality. These include the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE). The responsibilities of NAB include; accreditations for both public and private tertiary Institutions as regards the contents and standards of their programmes; determining the programmes and requirements for the proper operation of an institution and the maintenance of acceptable levels of academic or professional standards in the Institution in consultation with that Institution; determining the equivalences of diplomas, certificates and other qualifications awarded by institutions in the country or elsewhere (Government of Ghana Act 744, 2007; Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b). The NAB uses the threshold model, which seeks to identify the inputs or threshold standards required before offering accreditation to programmes and institutions. The responsibilities of the NCTE include serving as the coordinator of tertiary institutions in terms of budget, finance and salary negotiations, development of norms and standards to ensure transparency and accountability to the State. Its primary objective is to advice the Minister of Education on all matters relating to tertiary education (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.3. Internal Quality Assurance Practices at WIUC

The Quality Assurance and Institutional Relations Unit (QAIRU) was set up at the WIUC in 2011 as the main unit with direct responsibility for overseeing academic quality in all academic units, programmes and all institutional affiliation matters and was charged with the following duties (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b):

i. advise the ECAB on the determination and maintenance of acceptable levels of academic standards with respect to teaching, learning and research.
ii. conduct, in collaboration with the VC's office and HODs, student evaluation of courses and teaching staff every semester.
iii. conduct departmental reviews at least every five years, to be preceded by self-assessment exercises and quality audits.
iv. facilitate and oversee the preparation of quality audits, self-studies, quality assurance reviews, surveys, staff training and development initiatives.
v. disseminate on a regular basis, matters related to quality enhancement to the wider community and beyond.
vi. organize annual exit surveys of graduating classes and to periodically undertake tracer and employer surveys.
vii. perform any other functions relating to quality assurance as may be referred to it by the University Council or the Academic Board.

The Wisconsin International University College has an admission brochure that spells out the programmes of study and admissions requirement for each programme. The admission requirements stay in tandem to the standards set by NAB. Admissions committee made of up members of the various faculties and departments is set up to ensure that only students who meet minimum requirements and above of the various programmes are admitted into the university college. The committee meets more often during admissions period to select qualified applicants. Further the admissions unit organizes courses and entrance examinations to screen mature students before admissions.

The quality assurance unit collaborated with the Admissions Committee together with member of the Academic Board to undertake post admissions audits to make certain that only qualified applicants were admitted. The post-admission audits have helped to assure quality in the admission process by ensuring that only qualified applicants receive admissions.

2.4. Teaching and Learning Processes at WIUC

Wisconsin International University College has superb buildings, facilities and equipment to promote effective teaching and learning in the university college. There are sufficient classrooms, library, laboratories, internet and audio-visual equipments for teaching and learning as required by NAB. The Quality Assurance and Institutional Relations Unit monitor and report to management any problems arising so that appropriate actions may be taken. The unit works to ensure that scarce resources are utilized efficiently (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

The National Accreditation Board has as standard, 15 – 21 contact hours for student total load per week. Accordingly, WIUC management works to ensure that appointments and promotion policies meet the necessary requirements. Newly recruited staff goes through formal interview before they are appointed or promoted. For lectureship, it is a strict requirement that only applicants with a sufficient research training (minimum of research oriented Masters Degree/Mphil) are recruited. As a policy directive, more PhDs have been recruited to beef up the strength of the academic staff. All recruited lecturers serve one-year probationary period before being confirmed.

Students evaluate lecturers at the end of every semester. Assessment is based on items such as the provision of course outlines with references, adequate coverage of course content, the use of appropriate teaching methods and lecturer appearance among other indicators. These exercises are used to identify performing and non-performing lecturers for promotions and dismissal respectively (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

The Academic Affairs has made provision for online admissions via the university college's website to Ghana admissions managed by the IT Consortium. Also the Online Students Information System (OSIS) processes records and generates forms for admissions, entry of examination results through to graduation. Students are able to visit their portals to view their course registration, results and bio-data among others. The Academic Affairs unit produces brochures and handbooks for distribution to students during orientation. All examinations questions generated in the University College are moderated by external examiners from the affiliated universities of Ghana and Cape Coast. Examination conduction processes are made efficient by the proper distribution of students and invigilators into examination halls during end of semester examinations. Furthermore the use of student photo identity sheets in the examination rooms confirms students' identity and their presence in the examinations. The Academic affairs unit ensures that the submission and processing of records at mentor universities for the purpose of registration and graduation are done right and expediently (Boateng and Dziwornu, 2014; Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.5. Involvement and Ownership

Staff and students have an obligation and responsibility to be fully involved in the quality assurance and enhancement of their own work as well as that of the University College. Additionally, the management of the QAIRU at WIUC involved all staff in quality assurance and provided support for their professional and personal development which added value to the outputs from WIUC (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.6. Rapid and Efficient Feedback

Rapid and effective feedback from both students and staff were the bases for key information about quality. Student feedback was a critical part of the University's Quality Assurance Strategy and was obtained at course level, departmental and other levels and through a variety of mechanisms implemented by the support services. Staff feedback was obtained through a range of methods including departmental meetings, committees, working groups, evaluations of staff development sessions, questionnaires about validation and review of events and consultation exercises about specific projects (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.7. Evidence Based Assessment

Procedures, processes and practices within the University College were guided by objective criteria, verifiable data and other forms of hard evidence.

2.8. The Main Academic Quality Assurance Institutions
2.8.1. Council

The Council of the University is responsible for determining the strategic direction of the University, monitoring the implementation of their decisions and ensuring the creation and maintenance of an environment that creates equal opportunity for the members of the University regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender or creed (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b) .

2.8.2. Academic Board

The Academic Board is vested with the authority and responsibility for authorizing course additions, changes, and delegations. The Academic Board also ratifies degrees and approves courses/programmes as well approving the status of Affiliate Institutes. Papers to the Academic Board, emanate from the Graduate, College and Faculty Boards who are the first line of due diligence in the academic quality assurance process (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.8.3. Committees of the Academic Board

The operations of the Academic Board included the establishment sub-committees that were charged among others with the following:
    i.   oversight of all matters related to academic curriculum

ii.   approval of new courses
iii.   development of policy in support of the unit
iv.   establishment of a staff development programme for the academic staff

2.9. Quality of Teaching Staff

Academic staff qualification was essential for the quality process. Academic staff had the requisite academic credentials and measures were put in place to encourage their professional development. The committee responsible for appointments and promotions worked with others to ensure that the quality of staff employed was of the highest quality (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.10. Norms of Staff Mix

In compliance with the NCTE directive of 2012, the WIUC has adopted the recommended norms for staffs mix. For staff/students ratio the norms for Humanities/Business based academic department are respectively 1:6, 1:10, 1:16, 1:3 for Administrative, Senior Technical, Junior Technical and Junior Non-Technical staff. The recommended number of staff for Administrative Services in the Academic Departments is respectively; one, one, two, one, one, one for Administrative Assistant, Accounting Assistant, Clerks, Driver, Messenger, Cleaner. Additionally the recommended staff mix (Lecturers/Teachers) for an academic department in WIUC conformed respectively to the required standards as 10%, 15%, 35%, and 40% for Professor, Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer and Lecturer (Boateng and Dziwornu, 2014; Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.11. External Assessors

There is an independent assessment of standards and quality by the national accreditation Board as well as by external examiners in a number of ways. External assessors also play a critical role in the appointment and promotion process. All validation and reviews processes in the University involved external subject expertise as stated in the University statutes.

2.12. Office of the Vice Chancellor

The Office of the Vice Chancellor supervised the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review of the Academic Quality Assurance Process. The office also ensured that adequate resources were in place to support quality teaching and research.

2.13. Admissions

The assessment of all potential undergraduate students for admission to the University was governed by the Academic Board. The Academic Board is to regulate and be responsible for the implementation of the admissions policy. The Admissions Board ensures that key policies and procedures relating to the requirements and admission of all students are consistent with each other (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.14. Examinations

Faculty in higher education use assessments and examinations to improve instruction (Loacker, 1988) Examinations in the WIUC are an essential component of quality assurance. Every effort is made to guarantee the credibility and integrity of examinations. Examination Committees made up of senior and experienced members of the teaching staff was set up to supervise examinations in the college with the help of a team of invigilators selected from the ranks of teaching and non teaching staff (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.15. Student Evaluation of Teaching and Courses

The QAIRU regularly collected feedback from students on teaching by lecturers and the content of courses. Feedback was collected using paper questionnaire handed over students during the course of a teaching period. Electronic questionnaire for evaluations was also piloted. Feedback from the analysis of students' evaluation was relayed back to Lecturers through the heads of department for the necessary action to be taken in improving continually teaching and learning (Boateng, 2014a; Boateng, 2014b).

2.16. Enhancing Student Employability

Enhancing employability is a University priority and for everyone involved in Quality Management System, enhancing employability is about adding value to the curriculum and becoming certain about the fact that whatever is done would help students retain the employability skills and attributes they develop as part of their study. This and similar sentiments have been expressed by Knight and Yorke (2002) and Knight and Yorke (2004).
Employability is part of the wider group of benefits that emerge from learning. Whilst enhancing employability in our curriculum is of benefit to students in the employment market, it is also relevant to many students studying for their own personal development. By being aware of their capabilities, they can make the most of their opportunities at work and their career plans. All students are entitled to know how their studies contribute to a wider range of outcomes, such as increased confidence and recognition of personal achievement, that enhance not just their claims in a competitive job market but their ongoing development as individuals and lifelong learners.

2.17. Curriculum Validation and Evaluation

In the literature there has been series of strategies for establishing the validity of faculty and institutionally designed performance assessment instruments for learners in higher education (Loacker *et al.*, 1986; Mentkowski and Rogers, 1988; Rogers, 1988). At the WIUC, policies, guidelines and procedures on preparation, validation and evaluation of the curriculum were formulated and approved by the administration to ensure that the knowledge and

skills by the students for them to be ready to face the work force. Included in the QA system of the university is the validation of the curriculum annually of the new program and shall be evaluated before the end of its completion by indicating degree of agreement on the extent of adequacy of the curriculum as to preparedness of the graduates for the practice of the profession. The curriculum is validated annually by the faculty and students and at the end of students' attachment programme. Where students have done attachments in the industry, evaluations have asked to rate students on the level of proficiency in the identified skills such as oral and written communication skills, computer skills, human relation skills, research skills, analytical thinking skills, self-management skills, continuous improvement and learning skills, work attitude and knowledge related to the course taken in college.

2.18. Attachments, Internships and Practicum

According to Arroyo (2011), the level of implementation of attachments, practicums or internships programmes in a hospitality industry significantly influenced the level of job performance of the graduates the longer the period of implementation of the programme, the better the level of job performance of the graduates was also. At the WIUC, the attachment, internship and practicum experience provides opportunity for students to apply some of the theory learned in class to the actual workplace while working under the supervision of professionals. The field mentor, faculty supervisor, faculty advisor, and internship, practicum or attachment coordinator all work hard towards the success of the student completing the attachment experience. The attachment experience is one of the most important career enhancing choices the students makes. The students' get the opportunity to creatively build his or her resume and develop a professional portfolio by carefully choosing an employer for the attachment, field mentor, and special project. Reasons for which students from WIUC have chosen attachments include the following:

- Experiencing the general aspects of work in an information setting
- Completing a special project with a unique learning experience
- Understanding different types of information-providing agencies
- Developing an area of expertise with a large project

The attachment experience can propel the student into a career path or help develop an expertise in a particular area. It cans open doors to a special experience in a particular institution. It can also provide an opportunity to work closely with an expert in the field.

2.19. Jobs and Career Fair

Career fairs are critical events for graduate employability. According to Hanover Research (2012), they offer students and employers the opportunity to develop networks and gain knowledge of available job opportunities. The Students Representative Council (SRC), the public relations office and the Placement Centre of the University College collaborate in conducting annual jobs and careers fair and job seeking related workshop. The aim is to orient graduating students on job-search processes. Graduating students are given the opportunity to gain first-hand experience on job application, interview, and online job search. Occasionally officials and resource speakers from government agencies and other private companies such as those in the fields of telecommunications, health, education, business, information technology, banking, hospitality, business and trade are invited to give presentations about jobs issues and answer employment related questions students might have.

3. Methodology
3.1. Survey Instruments

The study consisted of online based questionnaire that was placed on the University College's website. An SMS message was sent to all students who had graduated with the University College from 2000 to 2012 using their phone numbers stored in the College's database. The SMS messages informed graduates about the Tracer Study and invited them to visit the University's website and complete the survey. The original survey comprised 27 questions but this paper is based on 15 of questions provided below:

1. Demographics
2. Employment related questions
3. How would you rate the usefulness of the WIUC curriculum in helping you develop problem-solving skills?
4. How would you rate the usefulness of the WIUC curriculum in helping you Critical thinking skills?
5. How would you rate the usefulness of the WIUC curriculum in helping you develop computer skills?
6. How would you rate the usefulness of the WIUC curriculum in helping you develop communication skills with people?
7. How would you rate the usefulness of the WIUC curriculum in helping you develop entrepreneurial skills?
8. How would you rate the usefulness of the WIUC curriculum in helping you develop research and investigative skills?
9. Please assess the strength and weakness of the quality of teaching at WIUC in terms of helping you find a job?
10. Please assess the strength and weakness of the quality of student workload at WIUC in terms of helping you find a job?
11. Please assess the strength and weakness of the compulsory courses at WIUC in terms of helping you find a job?
12. Please assess the strength and weaknesses of optional courses offered at WIUC in helping you find a job?
13. Please assess the strength and weakness of programmes, support services, activities and facilities offered by WIUC in helping you find a job
14. Please assess the strength and weakness of the programmes offered by WIUC in helping you build capacity for research

15. Please assess the strength and weakness of the attachment programmes offered by WIUC to provide you industry linkages?

3.2. Population and Sample Design

The survey targeted a population of about 2415 graduates (1318 males and 1097 females) who had graduated with various qualifications since the year 2000 up to 2012. The online survey is still ongoing. However, this report is based on a sample size of 238 graduates (comprising 88 females and 150 males) who had heeded the call to complete the online survey by August 2013. The list comprised graduates from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The programmes were (undergraduate): B.A. Computer Science with Management, B.Sc. Management with Computer Studies, BA Business Studies with options in Banking and Finance, Human Resource Management, Accounting and Marketing, Diploma in Information Technology. The graduate programmes included MBA with options in Marketing, Finance, Human Resource Management, Project Management and Entrepreneurship, MA Global Leadership in partnership with Azuza Pacific University, MA Adult Education.

3.3. Survey Implementation

The survey was launched in the second week of August 2012. The questionnaire was placed on the WIUC-Ghana website and several SMS messages were sent out to graduates through their telephone numbers stored in the universities database to remind them to go and complete the survey online. First reminder was sent in September 2012 followed by a second reminder in December 2012 then subsequently in February, April and June of 2013. In July 2013, responses to date had been collated, coded, inputted and analyzed in SPSS.

4. Results and Discussion

In terms of year of graduation, Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of graduates who took part in the study as follows: Only 2.5% of graduates of 2000 completed the survey; below 1% of graduates of 2006 completed the survey and 0nly 1.7% of graduates of 2007 completed the survey. About 12% of graduates of 2008 completed whereas 11%, 25%, 32%, 15% completed the survey respectively for graduates of academic years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Table-1. Respondent (graduate) characteristics in terms of year of completion

Year	Frequency	Percent (%)
2000	6	2.5
2006	2	0.8
2007	4	1.7
2008	29	12.2
2009	26	11.0
2010	59	24.9
2011	76	32.1
2012	35	14.8
Total	237	100.0

4.1. Graduates in Employment

The study revealed that 2.5% of respondents have never since graduation been employed but 84% are affirmed that they are employed and 13.4 says that they are not employed at the time of completing the questionnaire. Also it was found out that 55% of graduates said that their current job is not their first, whereas 45% said that their current job is their first job after graduation. The study revealed that in general it took two years for graduates to find the first job irrespective of the field of study and gender. It is noted that the time taken by graduates to find employment averaged one year from year of graduation. Most of graduates who explained that their current job was not their first also indicated that they had work before graduating from the University College.

It appeared that some fields of study commanded a higher demand on the labour market than others. The computer field is one of these. Most students graduating with specialization in computer studies, Finance and accounting found job quicker than those in other disciplines. A number of reasons were given by students for explaining the time gap between their graduation and their first employment. Some of the reasons included, jobs not up to expectation, no response from employers, field saturated, graduates not having the right contacts with people in higher places and time lag between application and interviews. Further questions on how graduates landed their first employment revealed that, 6% of graduates were retained in their national service positions. Those who found positions in family businesses made up 7%, graduates following up on jobs after recommendations from people they know constituted 24% and those responding to advertisement were 20%. Nineteen percent (19%) said they found work through their friends and 18% just by walking in to ask for places. Students who found employment through other means not mentioned made up 6%. Some of the fields mentioned include teaching, administration and management, the IT profession, Accounting, Banking and Finance, Clerical. Other occupations held by graduates included marketing, public relations and communications among others.

Table-2. Employment Status of graduates

Employment status	Frequency	Percent
Casual	3	1.4
Contractual	29	13.1
Permanent	154	69.7
Self employed	22	10.0
Temporal	13	5.9
Total	221	100.0

Table 2, above shows graduate employment status. Casual (1.4%); Contractual (13%); Permanent (70%); Self-employed 10%, and those with temporary status constituted 6%. It is observed that self-employment stood at 10%. Whereas permanent employment stood at 70%. While this may not be bad in itself, lack of initial capital to start own business, lack of confidence and risk taking to venture into self employment as well as parents' expectation to be supported after they have done their part in educating their wards may be reasons compelling graduates to seek secured jobs (permanent jobs – 70%) as opposed to creating their own business (10%) as shown by table 2.

4.2. Employment Organizations

Table 3 below shows the organizations where graduates from were employed; Municipal and District Agencies (12%); Multi-Nationals (18%); Private organizations (61%); University (6%) and other (3%).

Table-3. Types of organizations graduates work for

Employment sectors	Frequency	Percent (%)
Municipalities and District Agencies (MDAs)	22	11.5
Multi-National Company	35	18.2
Private	108	56.3
Self Employed	9	4.7
University	12	6.3
Other	6	3.1
Total	192	100

Positions graduates were employed to occupy are shown in Table 4. Graduates who received employment as first line managers made up 14%, those occupying mid-level manager positions were more dominant making up 40%. Graduates filling non-managerial positions constituted, 29% and those filling up top level managerial positions made up 17%.

Table-4. Classification of position in employment in terms of hierarchy

Level in employment	Frequency	Percent (%)
First-line Manager	30	13.9
Mid-Level Manager	86	39.8
Non Managerial	63	29.2
Top-Level Manager	37	17.1
Total	216	100.0

There was a strong relevance of WIUC's Curriculum to graduate job responsibilities. Eighty-six (86%) of graduates indicated that, the curriculum experienced at WIUC had relevance to their job responsibilities (Table 5).

Table-5. Relevance of WIUC-Ghana Curriculum to job responsibilities

Relevance Statement	Frequency	Percent
No, it is not related (but my choice)	22	9.3
No, it is not related (not my choice)	12	5.1
Yes it is directly related to my field of study	119	50.2
Yes, it is somehow related (within the broader discipline)	84	35.4

Ninety-nine (99%) of graduates indicated that WIUC programme was useful to the execution of their job responsibilities in terms of having equipped them with appropriate communication skills (Table 4). Ninety-seven percent (97%) graduates respondents indicated that the WIUC-Ghana programmes are useful in terms of offering them critical thinking skills in the performance of their job functions (Table 4). In terms of the extent to which WIUC-Ghana programmes empowered graduates to apply problem solving skills to address problems at their workplace 97% of graduates indicated that the programmes were useful (Table 4). On computer skills, 97% of graduated respondents indicated that the programmes at WIUC gave them the right skills and preparation to execute their job responsibilities (Table 4). Likewise 99% of graduate respondents indicated the WIUC programmes helped them to meet their job responsibilities involving the use of human relations and team skills (Table 4).

Ninety-six (96%) students indicated that the programmes at WIUC equipped them with entrepreneurial skills (Table 4). Likewise, 96% of graduates indicated WIUC programmes equipped them with investigative skills, helping them to accomplish their job responsibilities. This finding from Table 4 seems to be confirming Kemmis (1998) assertion about the relationship between generic skills acquired by graduates and their employability.

Table-6. Usefulness of the WIUC curriculum in helping graduates develop generic skills suitable for employment?

Degree of Usefulness	Communication Skills (%)	Critical Thinking Skills (%)	Problem Solving Skills (%)	Computer Skills (%)	Human Relations Skills (%)	Entrepreneurial Skills (%)	Research Skills (%)
Very High	41	33	34	35	45	32	29
High	48	52	52	42	43	41	43
Fair	10	11	11	20	11	23	24
Low	1	4	3	3	1	4	4
Poor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

4.3. Strength of Programmes taught at WIUC-Ghana

Eighty-six percent (86%) of graduate respondents indicated that the programme at WIUC-Ghana was strong in the quality of teaching and learning (Table 18); 80% indicated that the courses on offer were strong in quality and in meeting the needs of the job market (Table 19);

Table-7. Strength of programmes offered by WIUC in terms of helping graduates find employment?

Strength of programmes	Teaching Quality (%)	Compulsory (core) Course (%)	Optional (elective) Course (%)	Quality of Facilities & Services (%	Quality of Student workload (%)	Quality of Industry Linkages (%)	Research Capacity (%)
Strong	86	80	54	46	72	52	24
Weak	12	15	39	51	24	46	62
Not apply	2	5	7	3	4	2	15

Ninety-eight (86%) of graduates indicated that the quality of teaching at WIUC was strong. Similarly 80% graduated respondents say that the core courses they took were of good quality and relevance, Regarding elective or optional courses, 54% of graduates affirmed the high standards, 39% calls for some kind of improvements, changes or introduction of new electives . Facilities and support services (51% of graduates report weakness), (46% of graduates report strength) strong, signaling some kind of improvements. On quality of student workload (72% of graduates report strength as against 24% reporting weakness). On quality of WIUC's industrial linkages (52% graduates report strength and 46% report weakness). Regarding research capacity at WIUC, 62% graduates indicate weakness and 24% indicate strength. This is probably another area where improvements can be focused to improve graduate employability. It is interesting to note that in spite of weaknesses noted by graduates in facilities and support services as well as in WIUC's industrials linkages, graduates are still very confident that the quality of training, of teaching and learning and programmes WIUC offered them did prepare them adequately for the work of work. Being a Private University College and a new Institution, WIUC do have plans to expand the quality of facilities and support services and build more trusting and lasting linkages with partners in industry. It is expected that, when this is done WIUC will enhance employability of her graduates to a much higher extent.

5. Conclusion

Generally graduates of the WIUC-Ghana were satisfied with their professional situations and endeavors. They were satisfied in their use of the qualifications obtained from WIUC to work in demanding positions to benefit the Ghanaian society at large. From their responses it was clear that most graduates irrespective of year of graduation and sector of employment were satisfied with the education they received at the WIUC. Since this was the first study of its kind at the University College, there was no benchmark to compare results with. However, in future studies it would be possible to compare for instance whether the period for of seeking employment will decrease or increase with time.

A good number of students have changed job once or twice during the period under study   (2000 – 2012). A high percentage of those who had changed jobs are those who graduated around 2000 – 2007. It appears good number of those changing jobs went into self-employment putting the percentage of graduates on self-employment to 10%. The number of graduates in full time permanent employment was significant.

Majority of WIUC-Ghana graduates were employed in the private sector followed by the multinationals and then the public sector. For those in the public sector, it seemed majority were in teaching and education. The use of professional knowledge and skills acquired during studies at the WIUC was a very important factor expressed for job satisfaction. The usage may have varied from one degree to another but in general, graduates confirm that, the use of professional skills and knowledge such as communication skills, computer skills, research and investigative skills, problems solving skills, critical thinking skills, team work skills and leadership skills with human relationships improved their effectiveness in the execution of their job responsibilities.

The course content, compulsory and optional course selections as well as student workload all proved very useful to graduates current work. A significant proportion of graduates confirmed that they were able to realize the career they expected at the time of their graduation and that they were generally satisfied in their use of qualifications obtained from the WIUC.

There was indication for the need to increase the array of elective (optional) courses to make course selections more appropriate to the job market. There was indication also for improvement in the facilities and support services on offer for effective student teaching and learning. There was a call to beef up research capacity and formation of new partnerships and linkages with industry possibly in ways help WIUC to improve on design and development of its curriculum for academic teaching, attachment, practicum and research programming.

Taken it all together, it is drawn back from Kemmis (1998) argument on the importance of generic skills such as problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, investigative skills, team communication, presentation skills, time management and negotiation skills in higher education helping to develop well educated persons who are both employable and capable of contributing to civil society. As findings from this study may have confirmed, reasons cited by Kemmis in Kemmis (1998) to substantiate his arguments for the importance of generic skills for graduate employability holds true for the situation in Ghana today as possession of generic skills continue to experience growing significance of generic skills as more traditional jobs give way in the face of stiff competition and that prospective applicants entering the job market must have different attributes to remain competitive. Also there has been increasing pressure on the world of business and employer organizations to go for graduates who possesses generic skills and other economic, technological and educational attainments all of which have helped to bring arguments for generic skills ahead of others.

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