

Multitasking, but for what benefit? The dilemma facing Nigerian university students regarding part-time working

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Abstract

Students working part-time while studying for a full-time university degree are commonplace in many Western countries. This paper however, examines the historically uncommon part-time working activities and career aspirations among Nigerian university students. In particular, how working is perceived to contribute to developing employability skills, and whether it is influenced by their self-efficacy. Survey data from 324 questionnaires was collected from a federal university, although the data analysis used a mixed-method. The findings indicate that despite low levels of part-time working generally among students, older, more experienced, higher level and female students, place a premium on the skills that part-time work can develop. Moreover, self-efficacy and being female, is a significant predictor in understanding part-time work and career aspirations. This study offers originality by focusing on students' part-time work, the value working provides, and its link with career aspirations, within a relatively unexplored context of Nigeria.

Keywords: part-time work, full-time study, career aspirations, self-efficacy, Nigeria

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Introduction

The reasons people work, whether to derive a sense of identity, fulfil ambition, satisfy needs and wants, enhance self-esteem or achieve self-actualisation, have been subject to discourse dating as far back as Maslow (1943, 1973). In more recent times, students working part-time while studying for a full-time degree at university, has also been the subject of discussion, especially in the media (Kelsey, 2013). Here, changes in fees policy and the perceived resultant financial hardship of students have been the primary focus of debate (NUS, 2009).

Academic studies regarding students working have covered a broad spectrum of analysis, and while there are calls for an all-embracing theoretical framework (Broadbridge and Swanson, 2005), the diverse nature of the work in this area renders the achievement of this somewhat problematic. In this regard, studies have explored the motives of students' part-time work activities (Ford, Bosworth and Wilson, 1995; Richardson, Evans and Gbadamosi, 2009), the difficulties associated with balancing work and study (Evans, Gbadamosi, and Richardson, 2014; Hall, 2010; Moreau and Leathwood, 2006a) and the impact of part-time working upon academic performance (see for example Curtis and Shani, 2002). In addition, researchers have explored the relationship between students' part-time work and the value derived (e.g. Ford *et al.*, 1995; Richardson *et al.*, 2009). However, while part-time work is seen by Billet and Ovens (2007) as a useful precursor to engaging full-time with the workplace and can help inform employment choices, its value in driving and supporting career aspirations has received only limited exploration (see for example Evans *et al.*, 2014).

While an individual's career can be influenced by a number of factors, such as personality traits (Gunkel, Schaegel, Langella and Peluchette, 2010), gender (AlMiskry, Bakar and Mohamed, 2009) or perceived future earnings (Piotrowski and Cox, 2004), work experience is seen by Borg (1994) as the key influence on individuals' career decisions. Moreover, work experience is becoming increasingly important in helping to develop skills demanded by employers (Martin and McCabe, 2007; Paisley and Paisley, 2009) and these can be subsequently utilised by individuals to differentiate themselves in the jobs market (Tomlinson, 2008). However, how those employment activities contribute to career direction, depend largely upon an individual's belief that part-time work actually contributes to that end.

The notion of self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed, or manage, in a particular situation, and therefore influence how people, behave, feel or think (Bandura, 1994). It could therefore, potentially influence the decision of whether to work part-time whilst studying for a degree, since it possibly informs whether employability is perceived as the responsibility of individuals, rather than influenced by external factors, such as labour-market conditions (Brown, Hesketh and Williams, 2003; Moreau and Leathwood, 2006b). Nonetheless, even though self-efficacy theories might help explain why students engage with part-time work while studying, the relationship between the role of self-efficacy and part-time working has not been fully investigated.

The majority of research regarding students' part-time working activities has been conducted in the UK (e.g. Curtis and Shani, 2002; Richardson *et al.*, 2009). Only a few studies have examined university students' part-time working activities internationally, in Australia (for example, Billett and Ovens, 2007; Hall, 2010; Salamonson and Andrew, 2006) and China, (e.g. Morrison, 2009). Moreover, studies in the US have tended to concentrate on High School students rather than university students (e.g. Green and Jaquess, 1987; Holloway, 2001). There is much less empirical investigation of full-time university students engaged in part-time work in African countries. Taking on part-time jobs to augment meagre bursaries was one of the reasons that contributed to students' absenteeism in three South African universities (Wadesango and Machingambi, 2011). Additionally, Fayombo, Ogunkoya and Olaleye (2012) in a comparison of university students' absenteeism in Barbados and Nigeria, reported four reasons for this behaviour, in the following order: school or academic related, personal, home related and society related. In particular, working to meet the daily needs for the family was reported as a key home related reason for missing classes and was more prevalent and statistically significant for the Nigerian students, than the students from Barbados. As a consequence, the opportunity for researching the relationship between studying for a full time degree while at the same time working part-time, especially in a developing African nation, where levels of poverty could underpin individuals' decisions, could yield novel and exciting insight.

The contemporary Higher Education (HE) scenario in Nigeria

Nigeria has a long established university sector, tracing its heritage back to 1948 with the establishment of the University College, Ibadan (Efanga and Oleforo, 2012). Yet at the same time, Nigeria has 62.6% of the 168.8m population headcount, at the national poverty level (World Bank, 2014). This raises interesting questions regarding the motivations and career aspirations of students who might be working part-time whilst studying full-time. Do students value the degree so highly as a means to improve their long term career prospects and therefore do not do anything that might jeopardise this achievement, such as working part-time? Or do the levels of poverty in Nigeria mean many students have to work part-time at the same time as studying out of financial necessity? Arguably, these questions are not mutually exclusive, as it is possible for a student to be caught in-between desiring both objectives.

The Nigerian University Commission (NUC), the regulatory body for the university education in Nigeria, indicates that the number of universities has now grown to 129 universities, fuelled in recent times by the growth in private universities (Adeogun, Subair and Osifila, 2009) in order to meet the growing demand for Higher Education (HE) places (Akinyemi, Bassey and Ikuenomore, 2012). Nonetheless, the growth in private institutions is felt by some to be insufficient to drive the HE agenda in Nigeria, given population increases and the potential of education to improve the country's long-term economic conditions (Aluede, Idogho and Imonike, 2011; Ohiwerei and Nwosu, 2013).

However, while Akpomi, Amesi and Agumagu (2008) believe that the private institutions are important to the sector in raising standards through increased competition, Ilusanya and Oyebade (2008) argue that the high fees being charged for programmes are prohibitive to raising participation rates, given the prevailing low social-economic conditions in Nigeria.

Regardless of institution though, the level of associated expenses such as accommodation, textbooks and food, required to support individuals through university studies, falls primarily with the family (Obasi and Eboh, 2002), which given the levels of poverty in Nigeria, could be burdensome. University students could therefore be working whilst undertaking studies for financial reasons, in order to supplement immediate family income, rather than to support long-term career aspirations.

As a consequence of the fee structures of private HEIs, the publicly funded federal and state universities are now over-subscribed (Akinyemi *et al.*, 2012), with the quota system of place-allocation deemed by some as inappropriate (Chukwurah, 2011). The scenario is exacerbated by the growth in unregistered and therefore deemed illegally operating institutions suddenly emerging to fill shortfalls in demand (Lindow and Ekpei, 2009). Moreover, a feeling of deteriorating financial support and infrastructural investment in the public universities (Adawo, Essien and Ekpo, 2012; Idogho, 2011) has resulted in questions being raised concerning the quality of educational experiences (Oni and Abiodun, 2010) and appropriateness of graduate skills being developed (Akinyemi *et al.*, 2012; Oguzor, 2011; Oluyomi and Adedeji, 2012). There are indications in the media, that degree and higher-degree holders are being forced into manual trades rather than professional positions (Goday, 2012). While suggestions for increasing financial income in the public universities include increasing commercial activities, rather than merely passing costs onto students (Onuoha, 2013), there is a growing feeling that higher education in Nigeria needs to be more aligned with developing business capacity and in turn, contribute to the economic well-being of society more effectively (Ajayi, Adeniji and Adu, 2008; Egunsola, Olawuyi, Dazala and Daniel, 2012; Nkechi, Ikechukwu and Okechukwu, 2012). This incongruity between industry and higher education could result in students seeking work activity whilst studying, in order to develop employer-demanded skills alongside their academic awards.

The constraints of formal education in Nigeria necessitates that most adult workers who seek university qualifications, have embraced a 'study-as-you-work' kind of schooling in response to the ever-hanging world of work (Adebayo, 2006). Nonetheless, as Adebayo (2006) notes, the difficulties associated with coordinating work, study, and personal circumstances satisfactorily, remains problematic for individuals. In addition, for those individuals from a low socio-economic background, access to higher education remains elusive, especially the fee-demanding private institutions.

The contemporary HE environment in Nigeria, when coupled with the levels of poverty produces a unique scenario which raises questions that provide a focus for this study. In particular, the onus on families to support individuals through university studies must create a financial burden, raising the question whether inadequate financial support from families will increase both the awareness and option of students working part-time whilst in higher education?

Yet despite of the potential financial hardship for families and individuals, the demand for university places is growing, fuelled by the desire for personal development and to develop the economic capacity of the country. In addition, the skills derived from part-time working can be beneficial in supporting career aspirations, giving those graduates with organisational experience, a 'head-start' in what is a competitive jobs market. Moreover, employers complain that graduates are poorly prepared for work, primarily because it is felt that

academic standards have fallen considerably over the past decade and that a university degree is no longer a guarantee of communication skills or technical competence (Dabalén, Oni and Adekola, 2001).

Stampini, Leung, Diarra and Pla (2013) using empirical data from national accounts and labour market data across Africa, argued that despite the private sector employment being huge across the African continent as a whole, it is very low and even shrinking in most oil exporting countries, including Nigeria. Nonetheless, the problem with such argument is that it fails to take into account the challenges of the poor data availability and the validation of same in most of these countries. Moreover, Nigeria has the largest informal sector in Africa, stemming predominantly from its huge population poor economic performance over the decades and symbolised by a high unemployment rate of 12.9% and an increasing poverty level of 54% (Onyebueke and Geyer, 2011). The National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria recently confirmed unemployment between 2006 and 2011 was 14.6%, with an upwards trend.

Employment opportunities for university students in Nigeria could be influenced by the availability of suitable jobs. This could result in greater competition for available posts, with full-time students who are less flexible, being potentially squeezed out of the jobs market. Overall, the agriculture sector in Nigeria provides employment for about 65% of the adult labour force, while 88% of the non-oil export earnings come from this sector (Izuchukwu, 2011). Nigerian universities are however, located mostly in cities and perhaps the rural location and physical demands of agricultural based jobs might make it unattractive and difficult for many universities students seeking part-time work at the same time as study. Traditionally, the more attractive job sectors for university students are the retail, hospitality and other more urban type job setting (Lindsay, 2005).

It is the drive for long-term career aspirations amid the difficult prevailing economic conditions, competition for university places and high levels of unemployment that raises some interesting questions. In particular, when do students start to consider the importance of building a portfolio of skills for future career development? Is working part-time viewed as beneficial to a desired career by university students and are employability skills derived from part-time work appreciated and harnessed by students to support those career aspirations? How visible is career aspiration in students' HE experience in Nigeria, and to what extent do students take charge of their own capabilities in achieving set goals and outcomes? Do they have high or low self-efficacy and does this influence their part-time work activity?

Previous studies on higher education in Nigeria have neither focused exclusively on students' part-time work, the value that part-time work portends, nor their career aspirations. The study presented here is therefore exploratory and will contribute to focusing attention on these areas, as the Nigerian economy and students' higher education trajectories take a different turn. The value of filling this gap includes a contribution to the students' employability, their economic sustenance as well as possibly shaping curriculum development. The aforementioned discussion prepares the ground for the three objectives of this research:

1. To examine the extent to which degree student are engaged in part-time working and how important the income from it is to students.
2. To assess how part-time working is perceived by university students in relation to developing employability skills and how they are used by students for self-development and career prospects.
3. To explore the extent to which students take charge of their capabilities and whether the level of their self-efficacy influences their part-time work activity.

Methodology

Sample and Procedures

Data was collected using a survey method in this cross-sectional design, from Business and Social Sciences students in a federal university (public university) in Nigeria. Over 900 questionnaires were administered across different levels of study and a total of 324 were completed and deemed usable. This represents about a 36% response rate. Paper copies of instruments were administered in class and returned in boxes provided in subsequent classes. The questionnaire was designed to elicit structured responses thereby providing quantitative evidence of student employment activities, their personal characteristics and self-efficacy and one open-ended item. In the covering letter with the questionnaire, information on the purpose of the survey, an anonymity guarantee and affirming the right to withdraw, were provided. The sample comprises 55.9% males; age ranges from below 20 to over 50: Below 20 – 29%; 21-25 – 44.4%; 26-30 – 14.5%; 31-40 – 8%; 41-50 – 3.4% and over 50 – 0.6%. Also 15.1% were postgraduate students with the remainder undergraduate students. In the following section the measures used to obtain data are detailed.

The latest published data of students enrolled in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions (Polytechnics and Universities) for all 71 Nigerian Polytechnics in 2006 was 191,251 (males 110,360 and females 80,891). Similarly at the end of 2010, government figures also indicated there were 346,919 students (males 205,484 and females 141,435) enrolled in Nigerian universities (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). This study focuses on the university students.

Measures

Measure of work and study: Two measures were extracted from the scale of Gbadamosi *et al.* (2015), which extended the original scale 11-item scale of Richardson et al (2009). The two measures were: (1) Beneficial work (a measure of part-time work) which has 12 items. An alpha of .86 was obtained for this sample; (2) Career aspiration measured with 5 items and an alpha of .73 for this sample. Examples of items for **Beneficial work** included: *My job has helped me to clarify my career choice; The experience I gain from working is more important than the money.* For **Career aspiration**, an example item included: *The course has helped clarify my career choice, and I have a clear idea of career when I leave university.* A four forced choice response option was used (strongly agree = 1, tend to agree = 2, tend to disagree = 3, strongly disagree = 4) in the original scales.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy was measured using the Yorke and Knight (2007) two-component measure – self-efficacy questionnaire (SEQ). These authors measured self-efficacy using 12 items divided into: self-efficacy in-HE (6 items) and self-efficacy in the wider-world (6

items). A four-forced choice response option was used (strongly agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree). These were the same options used by Yorke and Knight (2007). As the Cronbach Alpha for self-efficacy in-HE was lower than the recommended threshold, it was discontinued from subsequent analysis (Table 3), with self-efficacy in the wider world (6-items) only being reported.

Demographic profiles. These were sought, including gender, age, level of study, if students worked or not and why they do not work where applicable, work experience, and job sector.

Open-ended item: To enable respondents to comment freely, they were provided space to write a response to the following item: “*Do you have any other comments regarding your work, study or yourself?*” There were a total of 51 responses to this item and these were content analysed and reported in the further discussion section.

Findings

The study has a broad, overall objective of analysing the extent to which university students in Nigeria undertake part-time work. In addition, the study examines the extent and relevance of students’ self-efficacy in undertaking part-time work, and how they perceive its importance for employability, self-development and career prospects.

Overall, the results reveal that very few students undertake part-time work. Only 18.5% of the research sample indicated they currently have any type of job. Two interrelated socio-economic indicators may be useful in explaining this. Firstly, the level of unemployment in Nigeria is very high, notably 23.9% in 2011 by government (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014) while other sources indicate youth unemployment could as high as 38% while total unemployment is 22% (World Bank, 2013). However, to put this in context, unlike many other countries, Nigeria defines unemployment as working for less than 40 hours a week. The second explanation is that public universities are largely free of tuition fees, with only nominal fees charged to students, which potentially negates the need to work.

When students were asked if they would take a part-time job along with their studies during semester time if they were offered one, 45.1% responded they would definitely take it, 24.3% definitely not and 30.5% would probably take such offer. With three out of every four students willing to take a job if available, it seems reasonable to argue that more students would work part-time if the economic and employment conditions in Nigeria were more favourable. The mean years worked of those in the sample is about 6 years, with a range from 1 to 30 years. In addition, the mean is about 4 years for experience with the current employer. Furthermore, of the students currently in employment and responding to this item, 20.6% work full-time and 79.4% work part-time. It is, however, important to note that 57.4% of the students who claim to be in employment indicate they are actually self-employed. This is a high percentage, perhaps suggesting a significantly high entrepreneurial tendency amongst the students who engage in some level of working. The remaining respondents work in education (12.4%), retail (7.5%), banking, finance and insurance (5.2%), manufacturing (4.4%), civil service (4.1%), construction (3.2%), hotel/restaurant (2.1%), and others (3.7%).

Whereas many extant research have investigated why students work part-time (e.g. Evans *et al.*, 2014, Ford *et al.*, 1995, Richardson *et al.*, 2009), few have actually followed this up with

finding out from students who do not work part-time, the reasons that underpin this decision (see for example, Hodgson and Spours, 2001). In this study, we asked students who do not work part-time, why they do not. Table 1 show a summary of the responses to this question.

Table 1: Why students do not work part-time

	Frequency	Percentage
Adequate support from family	83	30.6
Not enough time	60	22.1
Do not want to detract from studies	85	31.4
I am on sponsorship/bursaries	4	1.5
Health reasons	1	0.4
Other reasons	38	14.0
Total	271	100.0

Note: N = 324; 53 (16.4%) did not respond to this question

The first research objective is to examine the extent to which students are engaged in part-time working and how important the income from such endeavour is to them. The preceding discussion and Table 1 provides a summary. Higher education studies are generally very challenging and require dedication for a successful outcome, in Nigeria as does elsewhere. Hence students working part-time whilst at University, would typically work within the university, mostly in the library and students services if work was available, since it reduces travelling time and facilitates engagement with the prevailing learning environment. Furthermore, parental (or family) funding is perhaps the most common source of funding for university and other higher education in Nigeria. Given the background above, it is not a surprise that adequate support from family and not wanting to detract from studies constitute about 63% of the reasons cited as to why students do not work part-time. These two reasons are followed with nearly 32% indicating they do not work, because they do not have enough time.

In the second research objective, the study seeks to assess how part-time working is perceived by university students in relation to developing relevant employability skills and the value they place on part-time work, both for self-development and also career aspirations. Table 2 reports descriptive statistics, using the items from the extended version of the Work and Study Scale by Gbadamosi *et al.* (2015). Two facets of the scale: beneficial work and career aspiration are used and reported in this study.

Table 2: Students' Response on Part-time work (Work and Study Scale)

Work and Study Scale	Strongly/Tend to (Agree - %)	Strongly/Tend to (Disagree - %)
Beneficial Work ($\alpha = .86$)		
1 My job has a beneficial impact on my studies	78.2	21.8
2 My part-time employer has a career path that is of interest to me when I graduate	67.5	32.5
3 I have already enquired about vacancies with my present employer when I graduate	51.8	48.2
4 My part-time working is beneficial to my studies	70.6	29.4
5 My part-time employer is encouraging me to remain with the company when I graduate	49.4	50.6
6 My job has helped me to clarify my career choice	74.7	25.3
7 I really enjoy my job	80.5	19.5
8 My career choice has been influenced by my part-time work	66.3	33.7
9 The experience I gain from working is more important than the money	81.6	18.4
10 I work to gain experience of employment	80.5	19.5
11 I work to improve my CV	77.0	33
12 I try to excel in my job	90.7	19.3
Career Aspiration Work ($\alpha = .73$)		
1 The course has helped clarify my career choice	88.4	11.6
2 I really enjoy my course	88.5	11.5
3 I expect to get an upper second class of degree or better	94.1	5.9
4 I have a clear idea of career when I leave university	92.9	7.1
5 My career choice has been influenced by my course	79.8	20.2

From a pedagogical and curriculum development perspective, what is critical is the extent to which students appreciate the value of the part-time work as a means for enhancing employability skills, or how it might relate to their career aspirations. It is therefore an interesting finding that over 80% of the students place a premium on the skills that part-time work can inculcate (See Table 2): “The experience I gain from working is more important than the money” (81.6% tend to agree); “I work to gain experience of employment” (80.5% tend to agree). The students also significantly indicated that “The course has helped clarify my career choice” (88.4% tend to agree) while 92.9% tend to agree that “I have a clear idea of career when I leave university”. The item “My part-time working is beneficial to my studies” received a 70% endorsement, and similarly there was a 74.7% endorsement for “My job has helped me to clarify my career choice”. A close scrutiny of these responses and the strength of the endorsement from students clearly points to a positive recognition of the value of part-time work by the students, as well as a measured support for part-time work as a valuable link to career aspirations.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics: Means, SD and Pearson's Correlations of Study Variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Beneficial Work	1.96	.67	(.86)	.417**	.213	-.178	.026	-.011	-.312**
2 Career Aspiration	1.51	.57		(.73)	.177	-.341**	.236*	-.293*	-.064
3 Self-efficacy	2.05	.45			(.62)	-.038	.094	.110	-.024
4 Age	2.14	1.07				-	-.386**	.741**	.584**
5 Gender	1.44	.49					-	-.214	-.148**
6 Experience	6.44	5.80						-	.324**
7 Level of study	3.15	1.26							-

Note: (2-tailed); * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; $N = 324$;

Alpha reliability coefficients are reported in parenthesis where applicable

As table 3 shows, the lower the respondents' score on both beneficial work and career aspiration, the higher the value students place on it. The results therefore suggest that students who scored higher with the level of study, hold stronger values for working part-time as demonstrated by inverse correlation with beneficial work ($r = -.312$, $p < 0.01$). Such students are generally more mature, and are closer to seeking employment on completion of their course, perhaps making them more appreciative of the value of work. Career aspiration is similarly significantly correlated with gender (females) ($r = .236$, $p < 0.05$), implying that female students tend to signify higher value for career aspiration than their male counterparts. Finally, older and more experienced students place higher value on career aspiration, hence the significant inverse correlation with age ($r = -.341$, $p < 0.01$), and experience ($r = -.293$, $p < 0.05$).

Overall, with regards to the second research objective, the results suggest that students place a significant amount of premium on part-time working for their self-development, getting ready for the world of work and career aspirations. Clearly, the value of the employability skills they could derive from part-time work does not seem lost on them. Moreover, the most important signals of the value of part-time work among this sample seem to be with the following groups: the older and more experienced, students at higher level of study and female students.

Table 4: Multiple OLS Regression for Beneficial Work and Career Aspiration

	Beneficial Work		Career Aspiration	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Constant)	4.247** (.532)	2.236* (.625)	3.537** (.400)	1.723 (.474)
Age	-.354 (.152)	-.142 (.146)	-1.464 (.114)	-1.302 (.111)
Gender	.547 (.283)	.708 (.272)	2.001* (.213)	2.194* (.206)
Level of study	-1.534 (.086)	-1.927 (.083)	.213 (.065)	-.096 (.063)
Experience	.807 (.023)	.516 (.023)	.184 (.018)	-.104 (.017)
Self-efficacy		2.370* (.185)		2.172* (.140)
R-squared	0.081	0.172	.262	.325
Δ R-squared	0.010	0.091	.205	.258
F	1.147	2.123	4.618	4.902
p-value	.345	.078	.003	.001

Note: The table shows regression coefficients and their standard error in brackets. Significance codes (2-tailed); * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; $N = 324$.

To investigate the third research objective, the extent to which students take charge of their capabilities and the extent to which their self-efficacy influences their part-time work activity are explored. Multiple regression analysis was undertaken to provide answers to this third objective (Table 4). Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of assumptions or normality, linearity, multi-collinearity and homoscedasticity.

In model 2, the study variables did not significantly predict beneficial work, explaining only 9.1% of its variance, $F(5, 51) = 2.123$, $p < .078$. However, self-efficacy emerged as a statistically significant predictor of beneficial work ($\beta = 2.370$, $p < 0.05$). In model 3, the demographic variables significantly predicted career aspiration ($F = 4.618$, $p < .003$), explaining over 20% of its variation with gender ($\beta = 2.001$, $p < 0.05$) as the only significant predictor. Similarly, in model 4, the entire study variables again significantly predicted career aspiration $F(5, 51) = 4.902$, $p < .001$, explaining nearly 26% of the variance. Moreover, gender ($\beta = 2.194$, $p < 0.05$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = 2.172$, $p < 0.05$) emerged as the significant predictors.

These findings suggest that self-efficacy is a strong and significant predictor of part-time work and career aspirations. As this has not been investigated before, such findings have not been reported in extant studies. However, Evans *et al.* (2014) reported that among UK students there seem to be a lack of connection between students working part-time and future career direction, albeit in a qualitative study. The present finding reporting self-efficacy (and gender) as strong predictors of career aspirations and part-time working in a non-Western context (Nigeria), can therefore be taken as tentative. It does, however, imply that among this

Nigerian sample, a high sense of self-belief in one's own ability to succeed, signals a potential to take employability skills obtainable from part-time work seriously. This is especially more so with females than males, and is why the other interesting finding, relates to the value of gender in predicting career aspiration. Female students were significantly more positive about their career aspiration than the males. Overall, the result supported the prediction that self-efficacy is an important variable in understanding part-time work and career aspiration, among this sample of Nigerian students. In addition, that female students are significantly more career driven than their male counterparts.

Further Discussion

Part-time work availability and family support

In contrast to UK-based research which indicates high levels of student part-time working activity (NUS/HSBC Students Research Experience Report, 2010), only 18.5% of this sample indicated they currently have jobs. Yet, 75.7% of those not currently working would accept employment if it was offered. This suggests that students are either not actively seeking work, or that suitable part-time opportunities are unavailable. This possibly reflects high levels of unemployment in Nigeria, which restricts part-time work opportunities for students. Open-ended responses reflecting this viewpoint include:

I usually don't find the opportunity for work as much as I seek one during semester breaks

I work whenever I have an offer and free from school work

For those who do not work, the most frequent response cited is "not to detract from studies". Here, it seems that the desire to academically achieve outweighs the need or benefits of working:

Working and studying will affect the GPA (sic classification) negatively. Studying without working is the best part of studying

This coupled with the 22.1% who feel they have insufficient time to work (Table 1), presents a scenario of students who wish to graduate with a good classification in order to access a good career, and therefore do not want to jeopardise their academic performance by working.

I give time to my studies to achieve academic excellence

Working while studying can be quite distracting

The result that 30.6% of students do not work because of adequate family funding is surprising given the levels of poverty in Nigeria. However, since families financially support their offspring at university, Basse and Akinyemi (2012) suggested a cost-benefit analysis is adopted by families. Here, a son or daughter is seemingly supported financially at university in order to ensure he/she graduates with a good degree, secures a good job and in turn supports the family as a whole. The student comment, "My parents won't let me work" is

insightful, suggesting that parental pressure is applied to students to not work, but instead to focus on academic performance, because of the perceived longer-term returns to the family.

The perceived value of work

Despite the low participation rates in part-time work, students demonstrate an appreciation of the value of the part-time work as a means for enhancing employability skills, with over 80% placing a premium on the skills that part-time work can develop. Similarly, students' comments highlight the importance students attach to working while studying, particularly to contextualise the more theoretical aspects of their studies:

Studying and working are interconnected. One is theory and the other practice.

It seems that students value the development of employability skills through part-time working and consequently wish that their course of study embedded more work-related activities:

I feel school work is too theoretical and does not stretch me intellectually. I would love if internship is introduced which will help build skills

Making our study more practice based would help stretch our limits and exposure

Work seems to fulfil an important aspect in students' development to the extent that 80.5% agreed that "*I really enjoy my job*" (Table 2), with one student commenting that:

I love my work so much that I skip some lectures for it (Table 2).

In addition, 90.7% agree that "*I try to excel in my job*" (Table 2). Whether this is to fully embrace the personal development or challenge that work brings, or because of the scarcity of appropriate jobs resulting in utmost effort being applied for fear of dismissal, was not explored in this study.

Yet despite the benefits to personal development that part-time work is perceived to generate, it does not seem to help clarify or support career aspirations, with only 66.3% agreeing that, "*My career choice has been influenced by my part-time work*" (Table 2). Here, the course of study provides the greater contribution towards clarifying career aspirations, with 88.4% agreeing that "*The course has helped clarify my career choice*", and 92.9% agreeing that, "*I have a clear idea of career when I leave university*", with 79.8% agreeing that "*My career choice has been influenced by my course*" (Table 2). These results are surprising, given that several students commented on the theoretical nature of their studies and how their work provided more practitioner insight to the world of employment. It is possible that students already had firm career ideas upon entering university, and these have been merely confirmed or validated by pursuing that particular course of study.

While part-time working is seen to be useful in developing practical employment skills, it is clear that for those working, a primary concern is the income it brings, with 88.5% agreeing that "*I work to earn money to live*" (Table 2). The need for income relates to supporting a social life while at university (71.3% agreeing: Table 2). One student commented:

It's just difficult not working i.e. earning some spare money especially when considering the social pressures at xxxx (name of university excluded)

However, given that the research was based on a large, city university, this could potentially result in more student activities, and a more expensive life style and economic conditions being encountered, than a student studying at a rural or small town university.

Unemployment, entrepreneurial engagement and career aspiration

The findings indicate that 57% of students deem themselves as self-employed. It is however questionable what kind of activities these students actually undertake and how this relates to their future job aspirations. Nonetheless, unemployment of Nigerian graduates has become a national problem, as available jobs in the public, private and third sector of the Nigerian economy seem inadequate for the number of job seekers. Consequently, self-employment is increasingly seen as a viable option (Egunsola *et al.*, 2012)

Several studies, using a range of methods including case studies, qualitative and quantitative techniques conducted in Nigeria (Egunsola *et al.*, 2012, Obisanya, Akinbami and Fayomi, 2010; Oyebade, 2003; Uduak and Aniefiok, 2011), have all come to the similar conclusion that entrepreneurial education enhances skill acquisition, influences career intentions, and graduate self-employment potential and intentions. What remains unclear in this line of enquiry is perhaps the extent to which students may actually be taking advantage of the entrepreneurial education whilst still in education, by engaging in entrepreneurial activities. The findings of this study suggest that not only are students engaging in self-employment but they see some value in it. Examples include:

“Everybody should be given a chance of working for themselves”

Some other self-employed students noted:

“I love my work so much that I skip some lectures for it”

“Loans should be provided to graduates and easily accessible for self-employment. Awareness should be provided on Nigerian labour laws. Skill acquisition and training should be introduced to students”

Small business and entrepreneurial activities are very important to both the people and the economies of developing countries. This is especially so because they are a major source of employment and income in many of these countries (Mead and Liedholm, 1998). While it is understood as an innovative strategy to tackle youth unemployment, entrepreneurship among young people it is not a panacea to youth unemployment (Africa Commission, 2009, Chigunta *et al.*, 2005, World Bank, 2008). New business start-ups are rarely accidental and therefore generally viewed as a purposive and intentional career choice (e.g. Bird 1988; Katz and Gartner, 1988).

In the African context, specific research in the area of youth entrepreneurship is limited (Beeka and Rimmington 2011; Chigunta, 2002; Chigunta *et al.*, 2005). Nonetheless youths in

Africa, South of the Sahara, have the highest inclination to be self-employed (Chigunta, 2002). Farley (2000) suggests that a preponderance of youth entrepreneurial activity can contribute to youth empowerment, individual well-being, social mobility, community development and ultimately economic growth. Self-employment and unemployment can reciprocally induce each other, with the latter increasing the former and the former reducing the latter (Thurik *et al.*, 2008).

Research on the predictors of entrepreneurial intentions among students is inconclusive. Whilst some authors have reported that the year of academic study is an important predictor (e.g. Ahmed *et al.*, 2010, Farrington *et al.*, 2012), others countered by stating that the year of study does not influence entrepreneurial intentions (e.g. Degeorge and Fayolle, 2008; Kakkonen, 2010), or indeed that students may become more negative about entrepreneurship as they progress through their studies (Kakkonen, 2010). On the influence of the rural-urban location of a specific university, there seems to be a trend consensus that students who study in larger cities have more entrepreneurial intentions, than those who study in smaller cities (Fuller-Love, Midmore, Thomas and Henley, 2006; Rocha and Sternberg, 2005). It is therefore arguable, that students in the university in the sample in this work, may be more predisposed towards self-employment, merely because they are located in a large city.

Conclusion

The decision of whether to work part-time or not during university studies is clearly context-driven. While the UK studies, for example, highlight significant student work activity while studying, the research presented here indicates low levels of working. Yet, there is a desire among university students to engage with some form of work activity, not to underpin career aspirations or to finance lifestyle, but to enhance learning on the degree. This reconciles to the UK findings of Tomlinson (2007, 2008) who highlights the value that can be added to a degree through work experience. What seems to be missing here, however, is the availability of appropriate work opportunities for students.

UK universities are being increasingly compelled to raise levels of employability among graduates, and this has seen a marked rise in student placements, internships, work-based learning and similar work-related schemes being embedded into degree awards. Given that the research presented here, highlights that Nigerian students are similarly demanding of work-related activities, seems to suggest a missed opportunity for universities in Nigeria. However, the scenario demands greater responsiveness and flexibility on the part of the universities, to facilitate such arrangements than is currently available (Adebayo, 2006). In addition, it is important that those work opportunities are aligned with, and supported by employers. Mason *et al.*, (2009) in particular, detail the positive impact that employer involvement can have on graduate employability, while Rae (2007) presents a connective model drawing all key stakeholders together to a common end. However, in the current scenario in Nigeria, the necessity to collaborate could be negated by the current levels of unemployment and lack of supporting infrastructure. Yet, as several authors (Ajayi *et al.*, 2008; Egunsola *et al.*, 2012, and Nkechi *et al.*, 2012) note, increasing national capacity and

industrial wellbeing can be derived from the coordination of activities between employers and higher education institutions.

While universities and employers are seemingly missing out on the human resources that university students can supply, the students themselves appear to be overlooking the benefits part-time work can bring to their respective career aspirations. Here, students are viewing any part-time work and career aspirations as separate entities, rather than parts of an integrated whole. Unlike the choice of degree, part-time work is not perceived by students as providing the requisite thrust to propel their careers in a predetermined trajectory upon graduation. Yet, the greatest long-term benefit to be derived from working whilst studying must be from the experience it provides in a particular sector or occupational area.

However, this research notes that there is a corresponding lack of intention on the part of employers to retain the individual upon graduation, with students highlighting a low level of interest from their employer to remain in employment with them upon graduating. This suggests a short-term view is also taken by those employers, failing to see that the incumbent individual will be trained, more knowledgeable and more capable than a new starter. Moreover, students contributing to this research highlighted high levels of motivation towards their part-time employment, which is a clear benefit for employers.

While the findings in this paper reveal insightful details of Nigerian university students' part-time work activity, its limitations are typical of those associated with case research, in this work centring on one university. This limits generalisations. Nonetheless, the scope to extend and develop the research presented here is broad. Of particular interest is whether similar working patterns are prevalent among students of private, fee paying institutions. In addition, a longitudinal study assessing work participation as the Nigerian economy develops promises an exciting study. Similarly, students' entrepreneurial activity is outside of this study's scope, hence the finding indicating up to 57% of students who are engaged in work are self-employed is incidental, but highly interesting. This opens up a broad new area of enquiry for future research, but nevertheless again, highlights a limitation in the presented research.

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