

**EDUCATION AND ACHIEVMENT IN  
THE EARLY CAREER OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN GRADUATES**

**BY**

**C. N. OMOIFO, G. A. BADMUS, and D. AWANBOR,**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY  
NIGERIA**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rapid expansion in establishment of Universities has been a peculiar feature of Nigerian National Development. By 1996, there were 36 universities in Nigeria. In addition to the expansion of higher institutions, Nigeria has been faced with economic problems, which has led to Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and technical changes in the country. The response to the popular demand for high education has led to the spread of the scarce resource thinner and thinner over more students. Consequently relevance of training to job market and start of professional life and career paths have been questioned. These may have had impact on the level, type and spatial location of jobs available to higher education graduates in the country. This study is a trace of graduates of the University of Benin (1980 – 1995). The study is an attempt to assess the dimensions of higher education relevant to work and dimensions of work relevant to higher education. Specifically the study assessed:

- Factors for the Graduates' decision to enrol at the University of Benin.
- Graduates' ratings of study provisions, conditions and elements of study programme. In particular, usefulness of strengths, weaknesses and suggested changes in the study conditions and provisions in the University of Benin were assessed.
- Graduates' career within few years of graduation. In this regard method of getting first employment, time to start to seek for a job, factors for the graduates being employed were assessed.
- Graduates current employment and work. This involved the assessment of the number of times graduates had changed employment since graduation, their present employment status, kind of employer, economic sector of employment and the percentage working full time. Attempt was also made at assessing monthly gross income from major occupation and from other sources, and fringe benefits enjoyed by the graduates.
- The usefulness of graduates' qualifications for their jobs. These include the extent of use of knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, skills acquired and certain elements of their programme of study at the university for their jobs. Also included is the extent to which the graduates position and status are appropriate for their level of education. Finally reasons for graduates taking up jobs hardly linked to their knowledge and level of education are assessed.
- Graduates employment and work. The extent to which the graduates were satisfied with some characteristics of their professional situation, the overall assessment of their work satisfaction, and anticipated career changes within the next three were all assessed.

The study assessed the whereabouts and collected statistical data on the labour force of the University of Benin Graduates.

Combination of strategies was employed in tracing the graduates. These included the use of University records, visit to the Alumni Relation Office, use of publication of graduates of the university since 1970, use of Alumni branch offices and postgraduates course lecturers.

A target population of 4200 graduates was set for the study. The sample consisted of 1047 graduates from all the faculties, who graduated between 1980 and 1995. Males and females were proportionally represented in the sample.

The Instrument for data collection was a questionnaire adapted from Graduate and Employers' Questionnaires (Schomburg, 1995). There were nine sections consisting of 50 questions. The instrument was pilot tested using three chapters of University of Benin Alumni Association members. Data collected were coded and analysed for means, median and percentages using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results show that:

- Graduates rated reputation of the university/department, admission standard and prior grades, and area of specialization as the three most important or important factors for their decision to enrol at the University of Benin.
- Only five of the eighteen study provisions and conditions, were rated as very good or good by high percentage of the graduates,
- Research emphasis, one of the elements of study programmes at the University of Benin was rated as very useful or useful by only 48% of the graduates. This is in contrary to the other study elements that were rated as very useful or useful by 62% to 85% of the graduates.
- Application to vacant positions, is the most widely used strategy for seeking for employment by high percentage of the graduates.
- Only few graduates (about 13%) sought for employment within 6 months of graduation. Many graduates (72%) sought for employment between 7 and 24 months.
- In general, 81% of the graduates were of the opinion that field of study was very important for their being employed.
- The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) provided temporary employment and a form of intermediary for transition to actual work for about 71% to 78% of graduates of different faculties within the first year of graduation except for Medical and Law graduates.
- The percentage of graduates seeking for employment in the second year was found to be highest for engineering graduates (44%).
- In general 70% of the graduates had not changed employment or jobs.
- About 58% of the graduates was employed in the public sector, 33% in the private sector while only 8% was self employed. However many of the self employed graduates are from the faculties of Law, Medical Sciences and Engineering.
- Although high percentage of the graduates (68%) indicated that their positions and status were completely appropriate or appropriate, many do not use their acquired skills in employment directly linked to their university training.
- Generally the average monthly gross income of the graduates was found to be five thousand Naira (N5000) only. However, graduates in societal high rated professions, as Medicine, Engineering and Law had better monthly gross income.
- Only 43% of the graduates considered their jobs linked to their studies.
- In general high percentage of graduates (59%) did not have general jobs satisfaction to a very high or high extent.
- Obtaining higher income, achieving career advancement, and changing employer were the three anticipated career changes by the graduates.

From the findings, there is an indication of the deterioration of study provisions and conditions in the university of Benin. This is not too surprising since more students are

using the facilities as initially provided. In addition the financial allocation to the university is slim and not enough for providing new provisions and conditions. At best the facilities and equipment are refurbished for use. This no doubt has implications on the quality of graduates and consequently on their performance in Labour market. Not being able to change jobs may mean that most graduates had no additional employment to their primary employment because the jobs are not there and the public service code forbid holding two jobs at once. The high percentage of engineering graduates seeking for employment in the second year of graduation may reflect the availability of few technologies or engineering firms requiring their skills in Nigeria. In addition, polytechnics are known to produce middle manpower in this area, thus making the job market for such graduates highly competitive. The low percentage of self - employed graduates may be an indicator for addressing appropriate skills in this regard in the institution's curricula, as this will make the university produce graduates who are "job creator" rather than "job seekers". This no doubt will help reduce the issue of unemployment in the country.

As a result of these findings, it was recommended that:

The Federal government should make fund available for improving facilities in the University of Benin in line with explosion in number being admitted.

The University of Benin should restructure research emphasis in most of her programmes in line with employers' needs.

A follow up study on employers' assessment of the graduates of the University of Benin should be carried out as further evaluation of the findings.

## **Introduction**

University of Benin, established as Mid-West College of Technology in 1970 became a full fledged University in 1972. It became a Federal University in 1975 and the last of the first generation universities in Nigeria. It is one of the well sought after universities in Nigeria (Abudulrahman, 1992). The foundation faculties established in 1970/71 session were Medicine with 11 departments; Engineering with 5 departments and Science with 6 departments. The faculty of Education was founded in 1973/74 session with 5 departments. The faculty of Arts and Social Sciences was founded in 1975/76 session with 4 departments which were later upgraded to ten departments in 1977. In 1978 this faculty was split into two – Arts and Social Sciences. Thus by 1978 the University of Benin had seven faculties with 45 departments (Sada, 1995). Between 1978 and 1985, three new faculties – Law with 4 departments, Creative Arts with 3 departments and Agriculture with 3 departments were also established. However, the faculty of creative arts was scrapped and re-designated a department. The centre for cultural, social and environmental studies was also disbanded and the academic staff distributed to related faculties. In conclusion therefore by 1974 there were only 5 faculties with 31 academic departments or programmes. These increased to 7 faculties with 45 departments in 1978. Today there are 10 faculties with 57 departments. The faculties are Agriculture, Arts, Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Social Sciences. The different faculties run different academic programmes.

Admission into a university is a function of the changing physical capacity of the university, the development of academic programmes and availability of qualified staff. These are all subject to availability of funds. Up till 1976, the university through the Admission Board conducted its entrance examinations for the admission of candidates who had the basic criteria for the courses. By 1976/77, a Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board was set up by the Federal Government to regulate admissions into Nigerian Universities. Since then the University's growth in terms of students enrolment has been impressively high. In the twenty five years of growth, the university has produced thousands of graduates for the labour market.

The immediate objective of the university of Benin was to provide academic opportunities of higher education to many Mid-Westerners who could not be admitted into other institutions of higher learning (Yesufu, 1995 p. 5). The basic academic objectives were to train the high level manpower so badly needed by Nigeria in the scientific and technological fields. To achieve this means having high academic standard. One of the measures of academic standard is the quality of graduates. Quality higher education is influenced by many factors. These include quality of students admitted for the programme, academic environment, quality of infrastructure, teaching learning materials, quality of the programmes, quality of staff and so many others. Therefore quality higher education is a multi-dimensional concept.

Like all higher institutions the University of Benin also has the goal of producing quality graduates. This is very important because quality higher education markets the products of the institution and enhances employment opportunities of the graduates.

This study is an attempt to assess the dimensions of higher education relevant to work and the dimensions of work relevant to higher education as it affects University of Benin graduates.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent years there have symptoms symptoms of downward trend in the performance of graduates of higher education in Africa. There have also been complaints by employers of poor preparation of the university graduates for employment. Employers have also complained of graduates inability to take a leading role in resolving various problems within their areas of expertise (Mosha, 1997). In Nigeria, perhaps these are due to the popular demand for higher

education that has led to the spread of the scarce resources – classrooms, teachers, laboratories etc. – thinner and thinner over more students. There is doubt if the influx of more students than a university has been designed for can not lead to over crowding, poor teaching, impoverished research, frustrated and embittered students and academic staff and unsatisfactory services to the community. Perhaps the need to arrest the fast deteriorating situation has led the Federal Government to promulgate Education (Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Decree No. 16 of 1985. However it is doubtful whether the decree could be faithfully applied to government institutions like the university of Benin. Consequently, the quality of higher education, with respect to the appropriateness of the level of preparation of graduates for relevant work on graduation, may be questioned. This unprecedented expansion no doubt has far reaching consequences for graduates preparation and employment. It is widely assumed that as a result of the expansion on higher education, a growing proportion of graduates not only face a more risky and shaky start to professional life but also a less progressive and stable career path (Brennan J. et al, 1995 p. 6).

These issues of stress on resources, relevance of training to job market and start of professional life and career path are problems that need to be addressed, in a university such as the University of Benin which is one of the well sought after university in Nigeria. What is the situation with graduates of the University of Benin?

### **Research Questions**

In an attempt to seek solutions to these problems, the following research questions were postulated:

What are the factors for the Graduates decision to enrol at the University of Benin? What percentage of Graduates rate such factors as very important or important? Do the factors differ based on year of graduation and faculties?

How do the graduates rate study provisions and conditions in the University? Is rating similar for graduates of different years and different faculties? What are the strengths, weaknesses and suggested changes in the study conditions and provisions?

By what method did the graduates get their first employment after graduation? When did the graduates start seeking for a job? How did the graduates rate certain factors for their being employed?

What are the graduates current employment and work? How many times have the graduates changed employment? What are the kinds of employers for the graduates of University of Benin? In which economic sectors are the graduates working? What Percentage of the graduates is working full time? On the average what is the monthly gross income from Graduates major occupation, and from other sources? What are the common fringe benefits earned by the graduate?

To what extent do graduates use knowledge and elements of their study programme for their current job? To what extent are certain abilities and attitudes expected of them in their jobs used? To what extent are the graduates positions and status appropriate to their level of education? Are there graduates in employment, hardly related to their knowledge and level of education? Why do graduates take up jobs hardly linked to their knowledge and level of education?

To what extent are the graduates satisfied with some characteristics of their professional situation? What is their overall assessment of their work satisfaction? To what extent do graduates agree with certain statements, concerning their being self-employed? What career changes are anticipated by the graduates within the next three years?

### **Objectives of the Study**

In 1996, about two decades after the 'birth' of the University of Benin, a graduate survey is being conducted on a wide scale. The study is aimed at tracing graduates of the university from the consolidation phase 1980 - 1985 through the reversionary phase 1985 - 1992 to the reappraisal phase 1992 to date. The study is not totally an assessment of unemployment but also a follow-up of the graduates at work. Thus, this study traced many situations at employment.

Specifically, the study assessed:

- Factors for the Graduates' decision to enroll at the University of Benin.
- Graduates' ratings of study provisions and conditions and elements of study programme in the university. In particular, usefulness of strengths, weaknesses and suggested changes in the study conditions and provisions in the University of Benin were assessed.
- Graduates' career within few years of graduation. In this regard method of getting first employment, time to start to seek for a job, factors for the graduates being employed were assessed.
- Graduates current employment and work. This involved the assessment of the number of times graduates had changed employment since graduation, their present employment status, kind of employer, economic sector of employment and the percentage working full time. Attempt was also made at assessing monthly gross income from major occupation and from other sources, and fringe benefits enjoyed by the graduates.
- The usefulness of graduates' qualifications for their jobs. These include the extent of use of knowledge, abilities, attitudes and skills acquired and certain elements of their programme of study at the university for their jobs. Also included is the extent to which the graduates position and status are appropriate for their level of education. Finally reasons for graduates taking up jobs hardly linked to their knowledge and level of education are assessed.
- Graduates employment and work. The extent to which the graduates were satisfied with some characteristics of their professional situation, the overall assessment of their work satisfaction, and anticipated career changes within the next three were all assessed.

In conclusion therefore the study assessed the whereabouts and collected statistical data on the labour force of the University of Benin Graduates.

### **Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques.**

Since 1973/74 session when the university produced her first graduates, several others from the different faculties have emerged. However due to the difficulty in reaching every graduate, a target population of 4200 was set for this study. Since the number of graduates produced differed from faculty to faculty and between years of graduation, some faculties and years of graduation were merged for this study. Thus the graduates were randomly stratified and sampled for the study. The distribution of the graduates is shown on table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF THE GRADUATES SURVEYED**

<b>COHORT</b>				
<b>Year of Graduation</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Number of Returned Questionnaire</b>	<b>Proportion of Returned Questionnaire (%)</b>	<b>% of Sample for the Study</b>
1980 – 1986	840	152	18.1	14.5
1987 – 1989	840	194	23.1	18.5
1990 – 1991	840	215	29.9	24.1
1992 – 1993	840	280	33.3	26.7
1994 – 1995	840	148	17.6	14.1
Year not Indicated	-	22	-	2.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4200</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Faculties</b>				
Medical Sciences	840	60	7.1	5.7
Science and Agricultural Science	840	239	28.5	22.8
Engineering	420	56	13.3	5.3
Education	840	340	41.0	32.5
Social Sciences and Arts	840	259	30.8	24.7
Law	420	41	9.8	3.9
Faculty not indicated	-	52	-	5.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4200</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	2520	642	25.5	61.3
Female	1680	350	20.8	33.4
Gender not Indicated	-	55	-	5.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4200</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Five cohorts each with a target population of 840 graduates represented the different years of graduation. Figures on table 2.3 show that the highest return rate was from the 1992-93 graduates. This is followed by 1990-91 and 1987-89 cohorts. The least return rate is from the most recent graduates and the oldest cohort. For same reasons, some faculties were merged. Thus instead of the ten faculties existing in the university, only six cohorts represented the faculties. Figures also show that the highest return rate is from the faculty of Education. This is followed by the faculties of Social Science and Arts, and Science and Agriculture. The least return rates are from the Medical Sciences Law and Engineering. A critical analysis shows graduate out put in terms of gender to be in the ratio 3 to 2 (for some faculties). Therefore, the target population for this study was 2520 males as against 1680 females. Figures showed a higher return rate for males than females. In all the return rate for the study is 24.9%. The sample consisted of 1047 graduates.

#### **General Profile of Graduates Traced**

Analysis of the graduates' responses of sub-degree certification revealed that 85 (8%) of graduates surveyed had sub-degree certification from the University of Benin. This is an indication that majority of the graduates were admitted through the University Matriculation Examination (UME). The results of the analyses also showed that 103 (9.8%) of the graduates used for the study had completed Masters Degree programme by 1996. Most of these graduates were from Faculties of Science, Education and Social Sciences. These faculties are also known to produce the highest number of graduates of the university. Results showed that majority (66%) of the graduates were born between 1960 and 1969. The percentage of graduates surveyed who were born between 1970 and 1976 was 13. High percentage of the old graduates was from the Faculty of Education while the highest percentage of the young graduates (born between 1970 and 1976) was from the Faculties of Science and Agriculture as well as Social Sciences and Arts. A higher number of the older graduates (34% are publicly employed) while only 8% of the younger graduates are publicly employed.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection is a questionnaire adapted from Graduate and Employers' Questionnaire (Schomburg, 1995). There are nine sections:

**Section I:** sought information on the course of study at the University of Benin and factors for decision to enrol at the university.

**Section II:** is a retrospective assessment of study at the University of Benin. Information was on study provisions and conditions. Rating was on a 5 – point scale.

**Section III:** was on career after graduation for the first 10 years. Sub-sections included strategy for seeking job, when graduate started to seek for job, duration for search of first job, number of employers contacted, factors for being employed and kind of initial training received for first jobs, The items were both open and closed ended.

**Section IV:** treated graduates curriculum employment and work. The number of times graduate changed work, major activity, state of employment, employment duration, professional tasks, job title, kind of employer, name of employer and economic sector of employment were sought. Graduates current major work area, organisation strength, nature of employment, number of subordinates, other gainful activities monthly gross income and fringe benefits of graduates were assessed.

**Section V:** assessed graduates' job requirements and use of qualifications.

**Section VI:** assessed job satisfaction and anticipated career changes within the next years.

**Section VII:** sought information on graduates' continuing education and training.

**Section VIII:** sought information on graduate's socio-biographic data while

**Section IX:** asked for student's suggestions on the strength and weakness of study conditions and provisions.

In all there were 50 questions which were adapted and reworded to suit local use.

Since items were adapted from that used in different setting, it was necessary to re-validate the instrument. A pilot study was carried out. The items were distributed among Alumni members in three chapters. These were University of Benin, Nigeria Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR) and Sapele chapters. Again items that were found to be vague were reworded. Copies of the final instrument were then printed.

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

The University of Benin Alumni Association has 25 viable branches spread all over the country. By December 1996, Four thousand, two hundred (4,200) copies had been mailed to the branches, distributed by the postgraduate students or paid research assistants and the investigator. Announcements were made at the alumni meetings while the investigator and the paid research assistants visited churches, offices and schools. Graduates were allowed to take instrument home and return after completion. Unfortunately, the return rate was only 24.9%.

A combination of strategies was employed in tracing the graduates. First, was the use of University records. A visit to the Alumni Relation Office was first made. A publication of graduates of the University since 1970 was found. However, contact addresses of the graduates were not inclusive. The Alumni Relation Office also had a directory of the alumni branch offices. This was used to reach Chairmen and Secretaries of the branches and subsequently registered and financial members of the association.

In order to make sure that non-registered members were also traced, lecturers involved in post-graduate programmes as well as paid research assistants were used to trace graduates.

The investigator on her own used follow-up strategies by writing branch Chairmen and Secretaries.

Responses from the graduates were coded and the data so generated entered into SPSS data files. The data were analysed. Cross tabulations of the variables were made as means and percentages.

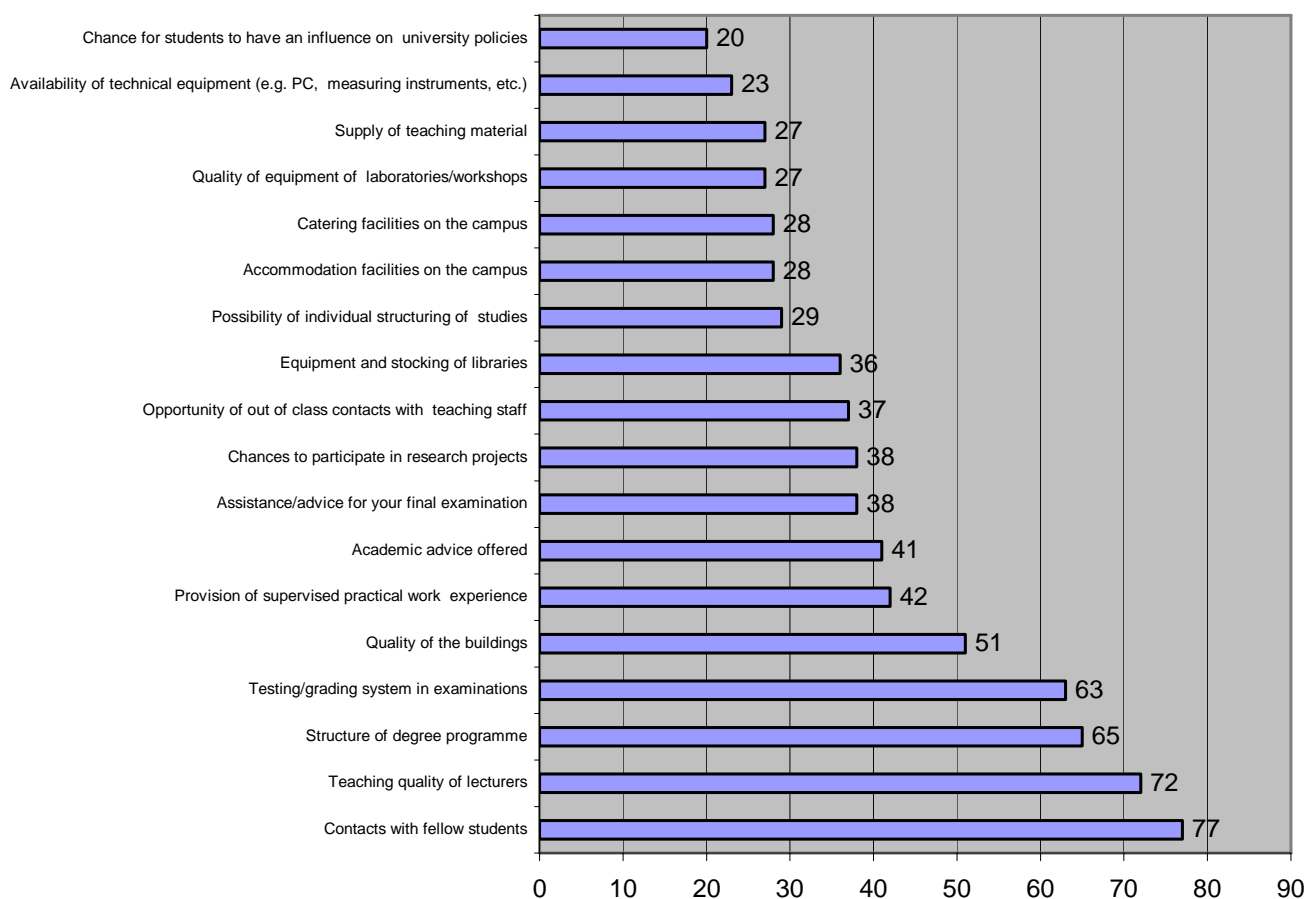
## Findings

### Course of Study

The University of Benin offers several courses at both full-time and part-time basis. These include certificate courses, diploma, first degrees and higher degrees. In this study, attempt was made to assess decisions for graduates to enrol into the University for first-degree programmes. Of the several suggestions made, the graduates rated reputation of the university and department, admission standard and prior grades as well as area of specialization as the three most important factors for their decision to enrol into the University of Benin.

Graduates responses on study provisions and conditions as shown on fig. 1 indicate that only five of the eighteen study provisions and conditions were rated by more than 50% of the graduates as being very good or good.

**Fig 1: Assessment of Study Provisions and Study Conditions  
(percent; responses 1 and 2)**

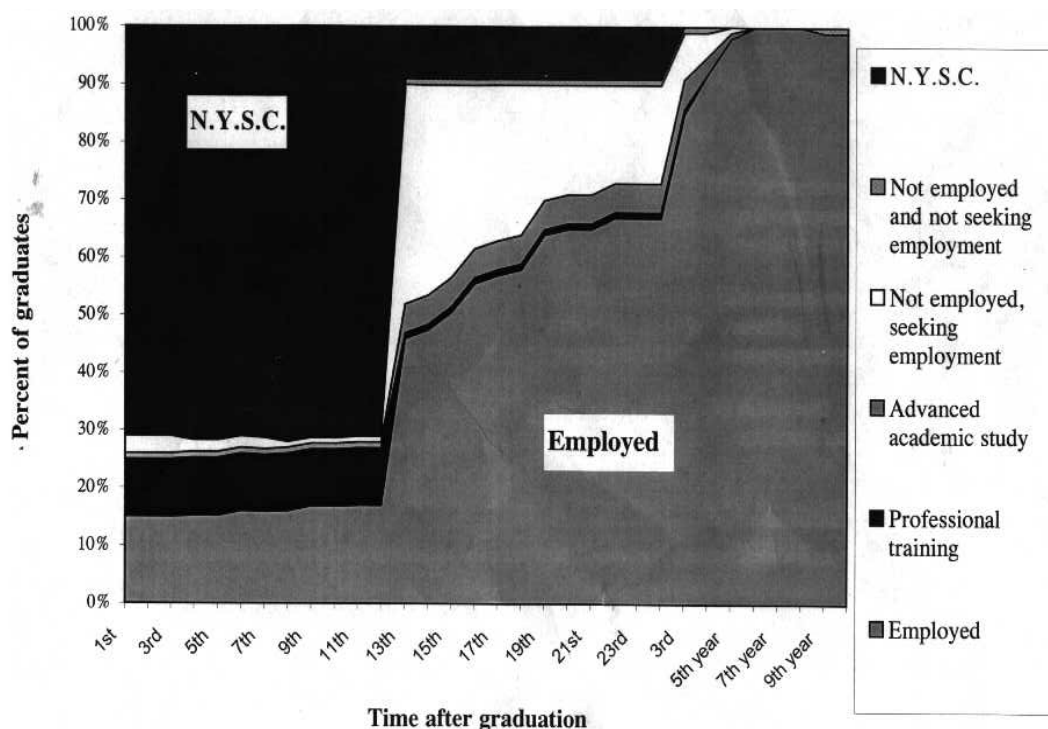


Question 3: How do you rate the study provision and study conditions you experienced?  
Scale from 1 = very good to 5 = very bad.

### Career after Graduation

Graduates were asked to indicate their employment situation after being awarded the Bachelor degree. Their situations within the first ten years were sought. Fig 2 is a summary of graduates career after graduation.

**Fig 2: Career after Graduation.**



Question 4: Please indicate your employment situation and your occupation after being awarded your Bachelor Degree at the University of Benin.

Findings are that within the first one year of graduation, about 71 to 78 percent of the graduates (except for Medical Sciences and Law graduates) were National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). High percentage of education graduates were found to be in employment within the first year of graduation.

### **Transition to Employment**

On transition to employment, graduates were required to indicate their strategies for seeking for employment, time of search and duration of search for employment. Response of graduates on strategies for seeking for employment is summarized on table 2

**Table 2: Strategies for Seeking Employment by Faculty** (percent; multiple responses)

	Faculty							Total
	Med	ScAg	Eng	Edu	SSA	Law	NA	
University's placement office	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Employers' campus visits	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
I set up my own business/was self-employed	2	1	0	3	1	12	2	2
Joining the enterprise of my parents/relatives	0	0	8	1	5	10	2	2
My own advertisement	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2
Manpower allocation	2	3	4	7	0	0	2	3
Private employment agency	10	2	2	2	1	2	7	3
University's teaching staff	0	4	8	3	1	0	4	3
Contacts through work experience in the course of study	4	5	6	2	4	5	0	3
I have not found yet any employment	0	6	9	5	6	2	2	5
Other	6	7	9	4	6	0	2	5
Public employment agency	0	5	4	7	5	0	11	5
Through parents'/relatives' help	0	6	13	9	10	15	13	9
The employer offered me a vacancy	25	18	11	5	10	7	4	11
Contacting employers without knowing about a vacancy	17	21	9	6	10	12	4	12
Personal connections/contacts	15	18	15	14	26	34	17	19
Working for the same employer as before my studies	6	2	2	40	10	7	33	18
Application to vacant position	50	37	43	29	33	22	28	33
Total	144	142	149	138	133	149	137	139
Count (n)	(52)	(219)	(53)	(305)	(238)	(41)	(46)	(954)

Question 5: How did you get for your first employment after graduation? Multiple reply possible

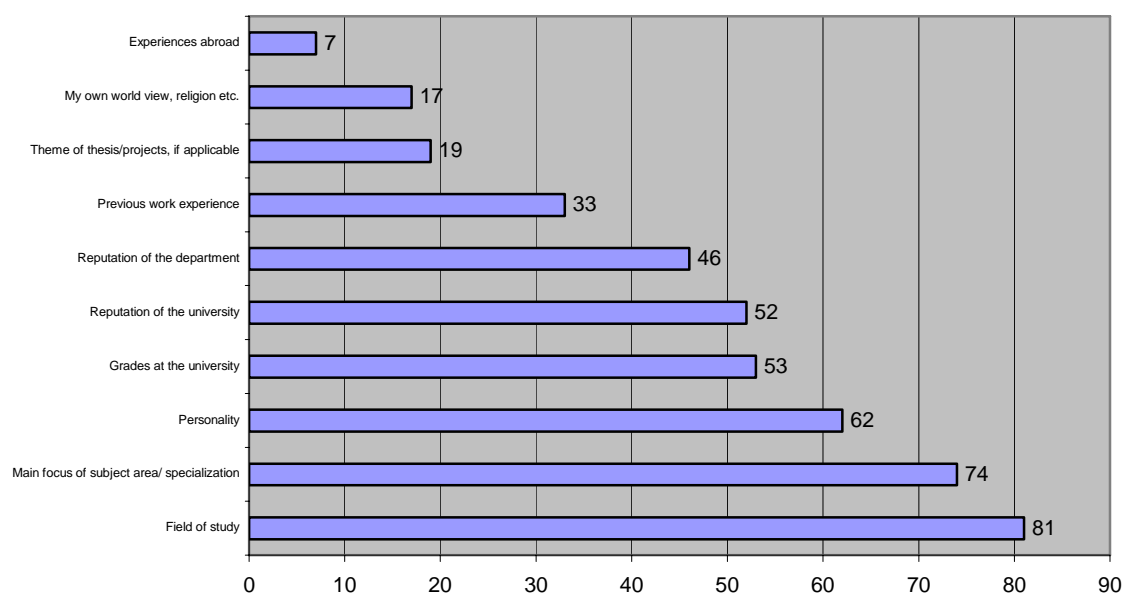
Findings from this study show that application to vacant positions was the most widely used strategy for seeking for employment by graduates of the University of Benin. Although the percentage of graduate using other strategies such as public employment agencies was quite low (5%). Findings are also that strategies such as employers' campus visits, university's placement office were not employed. Even when engineering graduates were considered only 4 percent got their employment through manpower allocation. Result showed that for all graduates from Social Sciences and Arts as well as Law, none got employed through manpower allocation.

Also, high percentage (72%) of the graduates sought for employment for between 7 to 24 months and 14% for over two years. Only about 13% to 14% of the graduates sought for employment within one to six months.

### Recruitment Criteria

For graduates to be employed, employers, no doubt, would be looking out for several qualities. Since this study was not employers' survey, graduates were also asked to rate how important certain recruitment criteria were for their being employed. Although this assessment was subjective since graduates were not employers, ten recruitment criteria of interest were included. Figure 3 presents graduates opinion on the importance of the suggested criteria for their being employed. Graduates were asked to rate the criteria on a five point scale (1 = very important and 5 = not at all important).

**Fig 3 :Recruitment Criteria of the Employer  
(percent; responses 1 and 2)**



Question 9: In your opinion, how important were the following factors for being employed?

Scale from 1 = very important to 5 = no at all important

In general 81% of the graduates are of the opinion that field of study was very important for their being employed; 74% of the graduates also rated main focus of subject area or specialisation while 62% rated personality as very important or important. These are followed by grades at the university (53% of graduates) and reputation of the university by 52% of the graduates.

### Employment Status

The major employment status of the graduates from the different faculties is summarized on table 3

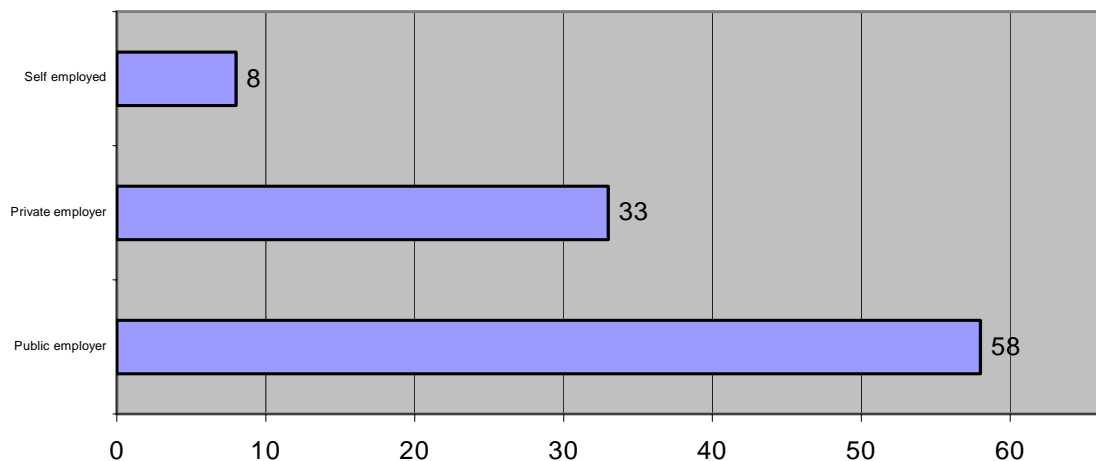
**Table 3: Major Employment Status by Faculty (percent)**

	Faculty						Total NA	
	Med	ScAg	Eng	Edu	SSA	Law		
Without employment, and not intending to be employed	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1
Professional training	9	2	2	6	4	0	7	4
Advanced academic study	2	10	4	5	3	0	2	5
Not employed, but seeking employment	0	5	4	4	8	5	2	5
Military service/community service, etc.	4	7	2	5	5	3	0	5
Employed	84	74	89	78	78	92	88	79
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Count (n)	(56)	(219)	(53)	(307)	(241)	(39)	(43)	(958)

Question 12a: What is your current employment status? Major activity

Generally, 79% of the graduates were employed. In terms of the different faculties, high percentage of graduates from law, engineering and medical sciences were employed. Distribution of the graduates as to the kind of employer is shown on fig. 4

Fig 4: Kind of Employer (Bachelor) (percent)



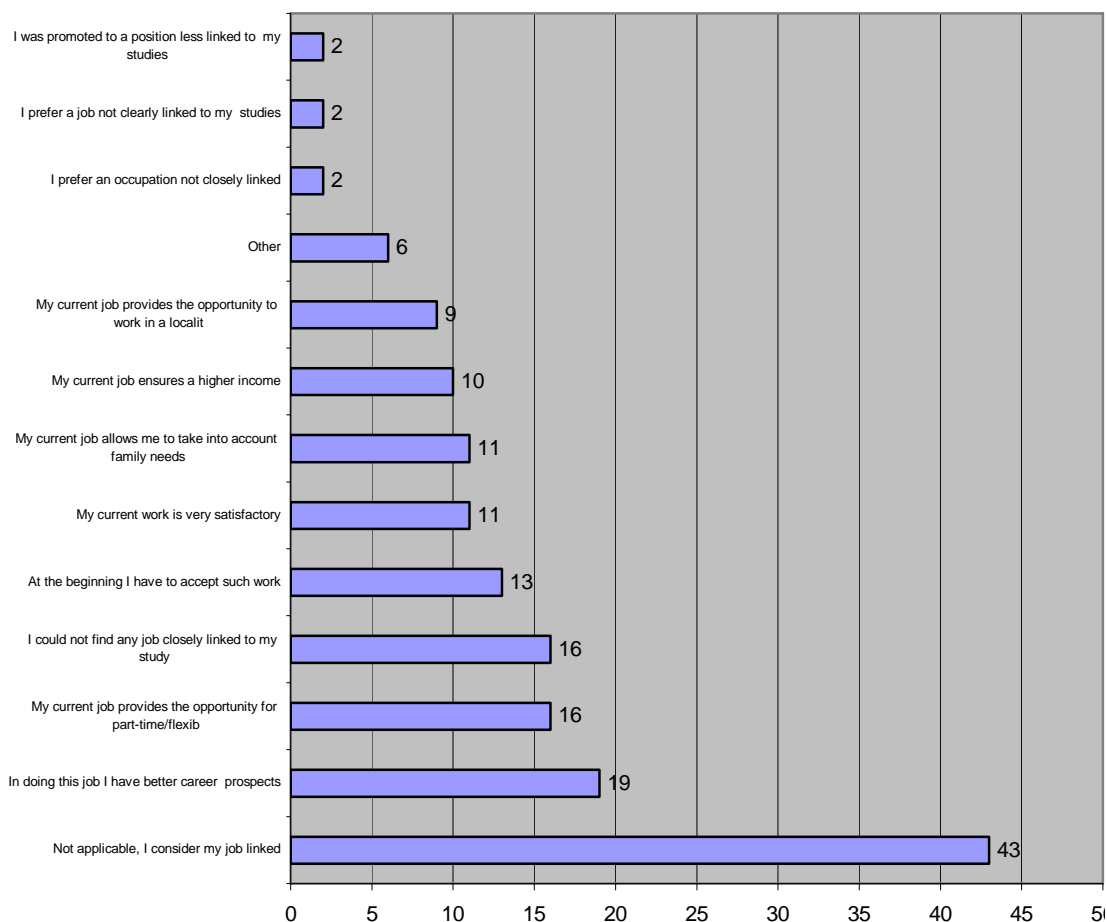
Question 17: Please states the kind of your employer? Please tick one item only

58 percent of the graduates (58%) surveyed held public sector employment, that is employment in a government or government agency, 33% held private sector jobs, while only 8% were in self-employment.

### **Employment Rarely Linked to Studies**

Graduates' opinion for taking up employment not directly linked to their studies were analysed. Eleven reasons were suggested and graduates had the opportunity to give more than one response. Summary of the analysis is shown on Fig. 5.

**Fig 5: Reason for Taking up Employment Rarely Linked to Studies (percent; multiple responses)**



Question 33: If you consider your employment and work hardly being linked to your knowledge and your level of education: why did you take it up? Multiple reply possible

Results indicate that 43% of the graduates consider their jobs linked to their studies while 19% were of the opinion that doing their current job will afford them better career prospects. 16% of the graduates took up jobs rarely linked to their studies because they could not find one closely linked to their studies. The same percentage of graduates (16%) took up jobs rarely linked to their studies because their current jobs are quite flexible and can provide them the opportunity for part-time. Less than 16% of the graduates gave other reasons for taking up jobs rarely linked to their studies. Findings also showed that only few percentage of graduates from educational (37%) commerce (31%) and Administrative (22%) sectors of employment are in employment linked to their studies as against the high percentage from Agriculture (65%) Health (67%) and industrial (57%) sectors.

### **Job Satisfaction**

The average monthly gross income of the graduates were found to be five thousand naira (N5000.00) from major employment and two thousand naira (N2000.00) from other sources.

In terms of job satisfaction with the characteristics of the professional situation, only six of the fifteen characteristics were rated as satisfactory to a very high or high extent by 50% or more of the graduates as shown on table 4.

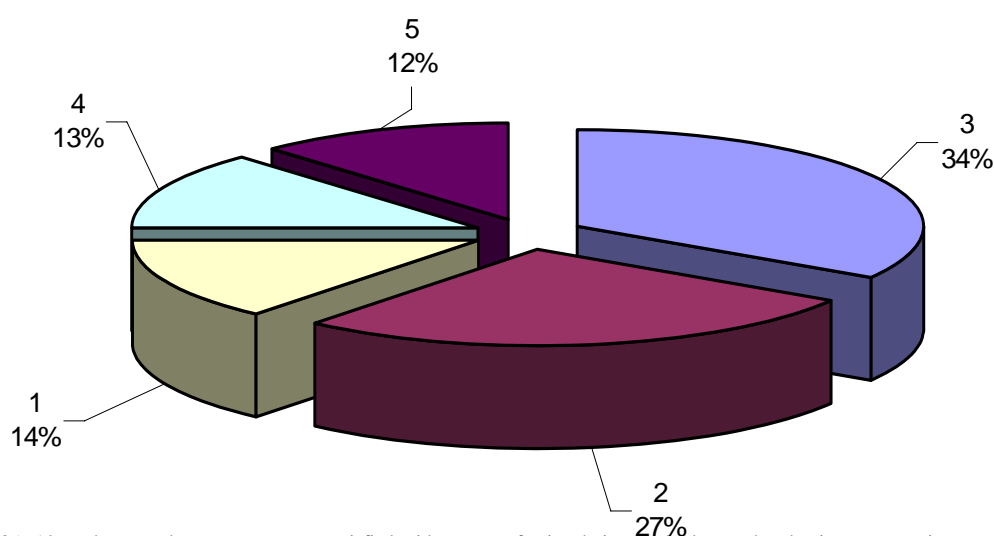
**Table 4: Satisfaction with Characteristics of Professional Situation by Year of Graduation (Bachelor) (percent; responses 1 and 2)**

	Year of Graduation (Bachelor)					Total
	80-86	87-89	90-91	92-93	94-95	
Fringe benefits	17	29	25	28	29	26
Income	18	25	34	28	23	26
Equipment of the workplace	23	32	31	36	29	31
Workplace surroundings (noise, space, climate, etc.)	21	36	34	34	26	31
Promotion prospects	33	39	39	34	34	36
Equal treatment of all employees	29	39	39	37	31	36
Working atmosphere	35	38	40	40	34	38
Position achieved	42	39	48	34	35	40
Chance of realizing my own ideas	46	45	53	47	46	48
Job security	61	55	59	50	41	54
Opportunity of pursuing continues learning	59	57	61	54	46	56
Possibility to work in a demanding job	61	68	54	56	43	57
Content of work/the professional tasks	65	64	63	61	52	61
Opportunity to benefit society	63	64	63	59	63	62
Possibility to use qualifications acquired during my studies	65	68	61	63	57	63
Count (n)	(146)	(173)	(231)	(238)	(124)	(912)

Question 34: To what extent are you satisfied with the following characteristics of your professional situation? Scale from 1 = to a very high extent to 5 = not at all.

Majority of the graduates of the different years of graduation rated 6 or 7 of the characteristics as satisfactory to a very high or highly extent except graduates of 1994-95 that had such rating for only three characteristics.

Findings also showed that only 41% of graduates rated the general job satisfaction to a very high or high extent as shown on fig. 6.

**Fig. 6: General Job Satisfaction by Faculty**

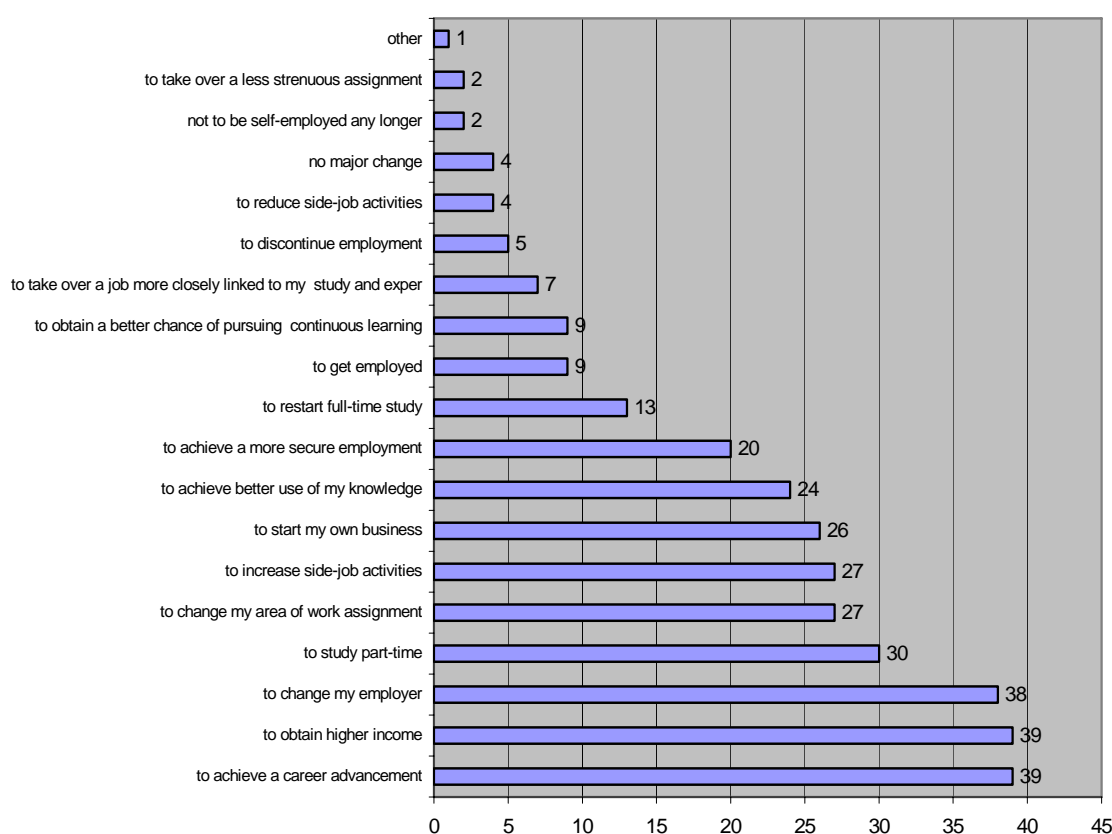
Question 35: Altogether, to what extent are you satisfied with your professional situation? Please take also into account in your statement any professional sidelines. Scale from 1=to a very high extent to 5 = not at all

There is also evidence that older graduates have better general job satisfaction than the younger cohort does. This is so since 44% of the older graduates rated general job satisfaction as very high or high, more than 31% recent or 1994-95 graduates. Whereas high percentage of graduates from engineering (61%) Medical Sciences (58%) and Law (54%) rated job satisfaction either as very high or high, only 31% of graduates from the Faculty of Education had the same rating. Furthermore, sector analyses show that only about 34% of publicly employed graduates and 47% of privately employed graduates indicated job satisfaction to a very high or high extent.

### Career Anticipation and Change

Mobility between and within job or employment is an index that cannot be ignored in the analysis of graduate employment in Nigeria. For this reason, graduates were asked to identify as many changes as they would anticipate in the next three years. Seventeen career changes were suggested. Graduates responses are summarized in fig 7

Fig. 7 : Anticipation of Career Changes  
(percent; multiple responses)



Question 38: What kind of career changes do you anticipate within the next three years? Multiple reply possible

To obtain higher income (39%), to achieve career advancement (39%) and to change employer (38%) are the three highly anticipated career changes suggested by graduates. High percentage

of graduates in the Arts and Humanities indicated obtaining higher income and obtaining higher income as the most anticipated career changes. However, Medical science and Engineering graduates indicated achieving a career advancement and changing employer. High percentage of law graduates had equal anticipation for achieving career development and obtaining higher income.

### **Discussions**

The University of Benin is respected for being one of the most sought after university in this country. Reasons for this in addition to the findings of this study include the relatively strategic location, being on the major axis of interconnection between the eastern and western sub-regions of the country where education remains the largest single industry. Furthermore, the qualities of programmes offered in the university may be quite reputable as has been indicated by graduates' responses in this study.

Admission of students into the university follow strictly, the admission policy set out by the body charged with responsibility throughout the country that is, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). Essentially the policy is that of admission by merit (i.e. through meeting the basic cut-off mark and ranking competitively with other candidates). Catchment area defined as states contiguous to the states of location of the university are considered as well. It is also important to note that some admissions are offered to the so called educationally disadvantaged states.

The University of Benin draws on all these to work its list for any given year under consideration. What is remarkable is that for every one spot, there are well over fifty competing candidates. This is particularly remarkable in some subject areas such as Medicine, Law, Social Sciences (in particularly Accountancy, Economics, Business Administration and Economics and Statistics). Essentially, these are professional areas where employment demand is not only high but with ample opportunity for sustainable self-employment. Graduates in these areas also have bright prospect for personal and professional success as well as job satisfaction.

This is an indication of the deterioration of study provisions and conditions in the university of Benin. This is not too surprising since more students are using the facilities as initially provided. In addition the financial allocation to the university is slim and not enough for providing new provisions and conditions. At best the facilities and equipment are refurbished for use. This no doubt has implications on the quality of graduates and consequently on their performance in Labour market. It is not surprising, these days; to find a room in the hostel originally designed to accommodate three or four students now being used by 10-15 students. Students do not have current books to consult in the Libraries. Catering facilities are also poor. These no doubt are sources of distractions and go a long way at affecting teaching – learning process. There is need therefore for government to try and improve facilities in line with the explosion in number being admitted.

Given the technological demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the University of Benin staff cannot afford to be competent only in teaching, research and service to community any more. The academic must understand and have some facility with the logic and basic use of the computer. This will at the individual and collective level enhances communications and increase efficiency in management and intellectual production. There is need therefore to train and retrain staff not only in their areas of specialisation but in areas of the use of the new technology relevant to their jobs.

The decay in infrastructure and facilities is perhaps the most visible evidence of the current conditions of the university. Apart from directly hindering the effective provision of research, teaching and consulting services, it often creates negative morale for all users (Onokerhoraye 1995).

To meet the multiple challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the process of rehabilitating the infrastructures and facilities needs to be enhanced. Facilities and infrastructures that require attention must be those that contribute directly to research, teaching and consulting services. On the priority list for rehabilitation and upgrading are the laboratories, libraries, lecture theatres, offices, toilets and hostels. High percentage (62-85%) graduates rated elements of study programme at the university as very useful or useful except for research emphasis which, was rated by 48% of graduates.

On career after graduation, it is observed that actual employment of graduates starts in the second year of graduation. This is quite different from findings of other studies. For example in 1984, three quarters of Swedish graduates heading for employment were employed less than one month after graduation. Only 4 percent of those employed one year after graduation took more than four months to find employment. Thus the transition period lasted four to six months for 15 percent of the graduates and more than six months for 8 percent (Teichler, 1985). In the annual Norwegian survey conducted half a year after graduation, the proportion of university graduates facing employment difficulties declined from 35 percent in 1982 to 16 percent in 1987 (Schomburg and Teichler, 1993).

The high percentage of graduates from the Faculty of Education who are in employment within the first year supports the fact that a good number of them had NCE before enrolling for the first degree. Consequently most of them would have been employed and are studying on leave of absence or simply on in-service for further training. The high percentage of Science and Agricultural Science graduates seeking for employment within the third year of graduation may be an indication of the low technological advancement of the nation. There are not enough industries to accommodate such graduates. It has been argued that the most viable project in Nigeria is education. Today, the nation is witnessing the establishment of many private (one-man owned) nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Thus the easiest job to get is teaching job yet the least paid job.

Results on transition to employment are not quite similar to findings in previous studies such as that on University Education and Engineering Profession in Tanzania. Result of the Graduates' and Employers' Surveys conducted in 1989 indicated that at the time of the survey nearly seven out of the graduates got their present job through manpower allocation. Contacting employers directly played only a minor role. In this study, manpower allocation is one of least effective strategies for being employed.

However, similar findings have been reported in previous studies although with lower percentage. For example, the proportion of British University graduates unemployed half a year (six months) after graduation increased from about 5 percent in the later 1970s to 12 percent in 1982, and declined thereafter to 5 percent in 1988 (Teichler, 1996). Thus, a long-term trend towards early transition to permanent employment can be observed.

Surprisingly, theme of thesis/project was rated as very important or important by only 19% of the graduates as a criterion for being recruited. Yet thesis or project writing is a very important part of all programmes at the University of Benin. It is almost impossible to graduate without writing and passing a thesis or project.

The study showed that the employment pattern for graduates of the university do not reflect a common trend. Understandably in a growing economy such as in Nigeria, employment is tied to several factors which are themselves very important. However, some of the professions for example, Engineering, Medicine and Education manage to enjoy some stability again because the prospects of self-employment in them especially Medicine and Law are very bright.

Job seeking pattern is a key factor in throwing insight into how applicants secure jobs. Among the graduates surveyed 33% responded to their previous employer and these were mostly in the public sector where training leave opportunities were available. For some others, it took between 7 to 24 months to get a new job if there was nothing to return to after training. Also because of the constraints imposed by the downward trend in the economy, opportunity to change job is very restricted. For example, majority of the graduates (70%) are unable to change jobs which means that the jobs are not available. Again the older graduates as well as the younger ones could not change job often. But the percentage is by far higher (92%) for the younger graduates than for the older (53%) graduates. This is an indication that the older graduates had many in their cohort who could change job (47%) while the younger graduates had only about 8% who could change job, an indication of non availability of such jobs.

The very high percentage of graduates of Law, Engineering and Medical Sciences who are employed 92%, 89% and 84%, respectively may be responsible for the heightened desire of every secondary school students wanting to be a Lawyer, an Engineer, a Medical doctor, a Pharmacist or a Dentist. Results also showed that most graduates had no additional employment in addition to their primary employment because the jobs are not there and the public service code forbid holding two jobs at once. That Education graduates on the other hand remained longer on the same employment. Teachers tend to remain longer on the job because getting another job with a teaching qualification is not as easy as one with a social science degree who in addition to teaching may be found employable in industries and so on. The teaching qualification is (too) professionally restricted. The results also indicate that graduates in public employment remain longer with the employment and in the position than those in private employment. The pattern is explained by the policy of colonial education system which trained people to hold civil service jobs while on a negligible few dared the private sector and self-employment. This heritage is yet to die out and government continues to be the major employer of labour.

Often it has been assumed that the relationship between field of study and employment is a perfect one. Consequently, it is assumed that an agricultural science graduates would be employed to do agricultural jobs. On the contrary, several graduates are known to have employment rarely linked to studies. A biology education graduates who has been prepared to teach science at the post-primary institution has been found as cashier in the bank. This finding points to the fact that many of graduates are not using their acquired skills in employment directly linked to their university training. These days many people are found in teaching profession or in educational sectors despite the fact that they are not properly trained for the job. Another common job for any one is administrative job. While it may be argued that university education especially at the undergraduate level is to train ones thinking faculty to solve general problems (be they of employment or general life) it is important to note that the trend does not augur well for the professional areas as it increases the risk of quacks. No doubt the strong desire to become employed where opportunities are restricted most have driven people to take up jobs for which their skilled training is not directly applicable.

The average monthly income of graduates from their major and other sources is poor. Graduate income has been analysed in many other studies. The vast amount of data available leaves room for very different interpretation. However, a long-term trend of reduction of income advantages that graduates from higher education institutions enjoy can be observed (Teichler, 1996). Poor salary or gross income of graduates will no doubt affect graduates' work place. The high percentage of graduates of Engineering, Medicine and Law with job satisfaction to a very high or high extent may be due to the fact that their professions are known and recognised as prestigious professions which enjoy high social rating. For the teaching profession, the job satisfaction is low certainly due to the prevailing poor social rating accorded the profession by the society and the associating poor pay packet. Consequently, many graduates from the Faculty of Education rated general job satisfaction as low. The high percentage of self-employed graduates, (68%) who indicated job satisfaction to a very high or high extent is intriguing. This can be explained by the fact that there is a direct link between effort (entrepreneurship) and reward whereas for the public sector employee the wage or salary are fixed and pre-determined. The high job satisfaction indicated by Agricultural (75%) and Industrial (65%) graduate employees is remarkable and points to encouraging indices of agriculturally based development and industrialization given the necessary conducive economic climate. Such development no doubt will open employment opportunities.

Results have also shown a pattern of job anticipation or change among University of Benin graduates. For example, the highest percentage recorded among graduates of social sciences (41%) and Education (40%) may be directly linked to the versatility of the social sciences degrees for placements in several kinds of job opportunity while for Education graduates low job satisfactory would be the compelling factor. Results also indicate differences in anticipation of career changes in the next three years among graduates publicly privately and self-employed. For public employed graduates the most anticipation of career changes is obtaining higher income. For private and self-employed graduates it is achieving career advancement.

### **Conclusion**

The University of Benin is the most sought after university in Nigeria. Its graduates are in different kinds of employment throughout the country. The university produces graduates in several professions such as Engineering, Medicine, Education, Agriculture, Law, Arts and the Social Sciences. Majorities of university graduates end up in public sector employment where there is job security while the private sector and self-employment remain less attractive essentially because of the high risks associated with them in a down turned economic climate. Graduate of Law and Medicine dominate the self-employment sector. Teachers remain longer in their place of employment than all other professionals and ironically, suffer the most job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, University of Benin graduates express concern over the pressure on facilities and the need to expand and/or refurbish existing structures and provide more infrastructures in order to improve learning situation in the university.

### **Recommendations**

As a result of these findings, it is recommended that:

- (i) The Federal government should make fund available for improving facilities in the University of Benin in line with explosion in number being admitted.
- (ii) The University of Benin should restructure research emphasis in most of her programmes in line with employers' needs.
- (iii) A follow up study of employers' assessment of the graduates of the University of Benin is carried out as further evaluation of the findings.

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