

## SKILLS FOR EXCELLENCE AND EMPLOYABILITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

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**ABSTRACT:** *The world owing to ICT has taken a different dimension; activities are highly sophisticated and need sophisticated skills and skilled men to handle them. Men who are unskilled and depend on archaic and old fashion way of doing things and carrying out activities are obsolete, out of job or placed at the lower cadre of their profession, an age where mechanization and high level technology is the order of the day. The jetty speed, at which the world moves, requires jetty effort and should be criteria for choice of profession and desired skill to acquire and the level at which it is acquired. The paper therefore put it this way that all skills are skills, but some skills attract more employability than others as a result of the level of excellence attained in them. It's on this note that the paper on “**Skills for Excellence and Employability in the Modern World**” will look into the following areas: Characteristics of Excellence, Concept of Employability vis-a-viz the Modern World, Concept of Skills for Excellence vis-a-viz Employed/Employability, Skills for Excellence in the Modern World, conclusion and recommendation.*

**KEY WORDS:** Skills, Excellence, Employability, Modern World

## INTRODUCTION

Development is deeply-rooted in the qualitative transformation of a nation's human resources. Transformation essentially relates to the capacity and creative capability of a people to effectively transform natural resources of their environment into goods and services through the imaginative application of their creative talents and labour power. This clearly debunks the erstwhile view in Nigeria that money is the basis of Transformation. If this were so, the billions of naira that have been expended on various projects particularly during the oil boom days would have taken us to the developed nations club (Ukaïke, 2014 in Adamolekun, 1989). Therefore there is need to put into consideration the skills to acquire vis-a-viz the job prospect and its employability in the modern world.

It's on this note that one can conclude that the transformation and development of any nation depends on excellent skills acquired in all spheres of human endeavour rather than, the natural resource deposit, because the resources will depend on the skills acquired by the personnel to properly extract it and put it to best use. Jobs and skills acquired in life can be so satisfying depending on its nature and its need and usefulness in the society, not forgetting the how excellent an individual turns out in such job or skill acquired. Which implies that there are **skills** that ordinarily yields **excellence**, **employable** in the **modern world**.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language (2009), defined skills as an art, trade, or technique, particularly one requiring use of the hands or body, also as a developed talent or ability. Collins English Dictionary (2003), defined skills as a special ability in a task,

sport, etc, especially ability acquired by training, also as something, especially a trade or technique, requiring special training or manual proficiency.

Practice makes perfect, studies have shown that the most important way to achieve excellent performance in fields such as sport, music, professions and scholarship is to practice. Excellence is a talent or quality which is unusually good and so surpasses ordinary standards. It is also used as a standard of performance as measured e.g. through economic indicators, grading system in schools etc. In modern public relations and marketing, "excellence" is a much overused buzzword that tries to convey a good impression often without imparting any concrete information (e.g. "center of excellence in ...", "business excellence", etc), (Ericsson, 1996). Collins English Dictionary (2003), defined excellence as the state or quality of excelling or being exceptionally good; extreme merit; superiority, also as an action, characteristic, feature, etc, in which a person excels.

For individuals, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) they possess, the way they present those assets to employers. As such employability is affected by both supply-side and demand-side factors which are often outside of an individual's control. Employability refers to a person's capability for gaining and maintaining employment (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). The changing nature in public employment policy, with increasing emphasis being given to skills-based solutions to economic competition and work-based solutions to social deprivation.

Robinson (2000), stressed that employability is a basic set of skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job. Sanders and De Grip (2004) defined employability as the capacity and the willingness to be and to remain attractive in the labour market. Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2005) defined employability as the continuously fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of efforts. Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004) define employability as a form of work specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize career opportunity. Employability facilitates the movement between jobs, both within and between organizations.

The concept of the modern world as distinct from an ancient or medieval world rests on a sense that the modern world is not just another era in history, but rather the result of a new type of change. This is usually conceived of as progress driven by deliberate human efforts to better their situation. Advances in all areas of human activity —politics, industry, society , economics , commerce, transport, communication, mechanization , automation , science , medicine , technology , and culture — appear to have transformed an Old World into the Modern or New World. Modern world could be referred to 'Jet Age', 'ICT Age'.

### **Characteristics of Excellence**

Excellence begins in the heart; you cannot be ordinary in your heart and extraordinary in your life. Similarly you will not be ordinary in your life if you are extraordinary in your heart. As you seek to pursue excellence, the following characteristics of excellence that are often overlooked (Seas, 2011):

**Developed Over Time:** Excellence is always on, always growing, and always learning. No one is born excellent. Instead, excellence is developed over time by experience and the

testing of faith. James 1:2-4 tells us that trials produce perseverance and perseverance produces faith – thus making you mature and complete. Furthermore, excellence is developed in the details. If you do the little things diligently every day to improve, excellence becomes attainable. It's all about implementation. Plan to be excellent, and then take every step necessary to fulfill that plan.

**Skeptical Inquirer:** 1 John 4:1 says, “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God...” Excellence demands a skeptical inquirer because it is not easily blown and tossed by the wind (James 1:6), therefore enabling you to make sound decisions, pursue only things worth pursuing, and function as a trusted resource in every matter of life. By being a skeptical inquirer, you reduce wasted thoughts, actions, and ideas and focus completely on pursuits of excellence.

**Complete:** Excellence is not a skill – it is an attitude (Ralph Martson). Excellence is an attitude that touches every area of your life. You are called to be excellent in everything you do (2 Corinthians 8:7). True excellence means you dedicate yourself fully to everything you do.

**Benchmarks against Itself:** Excellence does not compare itself to others. Instead, people who are excellent benchmark their performance against themselves because they know God judges us not by our harvest but by our seed (Luke 12:48). Don't look outward to measure your excellence; instead look inward and compare your growth to where you were in the past.

### **Concept of Employability vis-a-viz the Modern World**

Employability has been in the literature for many years. Current interest has been driven by: the changing nature in public employment policy, with increasing emphasis being given to skills-based solutions to economic competition and work-based solutions to social deprivation.

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‘Employability not only depends on whether one is able to fulfil the requirements of specific jobs, but also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers’ (Brown

and Hesketh, 2004). Taking the supply and demand of labour into account challenges the idea that credentials, knowledge and social status alone will guarantee a good position in the labour market. With the move to a more knowledge based economy, it is widely thought that there is an increasing demand for high-calibre managerial talent. However, a focus on obtaining skills in order to gain good employment has led to an over-supply of graduates and a larger number of contenders chasing the same top jobs. Brown and Hesketh argue that there is a clear mismatch between individuals' expectations of employability and the realities posed by the labour market.

Under these conditions, students will use a number of tactics in the labour market to maintain competitive advantage. Brown and Hesketh identify two ideal types of individuals entering the labour market. Those who will do anything to get a top job are classed as 'players'. Players are not afraid to take on a different identity if they feel that is what the employer is looking for. The second type, 'purists' are those who believe that job market outcomes should reflect meritocratic achievement. For purists it is important to maintain an authentic sense of self as this will ensure a good fit between individual capabilities and occupational demands. Purists may be as competitive as Players but feel that Players are cheating in order to get ahead.

This view of employability incorporates the dual aspects of supply and demand of labour to show that advancing one's position in the labour market by gaining credentials is partially dependent on structural factors outside the individual's control. The recent financial crisis demonstrates that global economic factors can and do have a significant impact on the likelihood of an individual securing a job regardless of their skills, credentials and social status.

Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004) define employability as a form of work specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize career opportunity. Employability facilitates the movement between jobs, both within and between organizations Fugate et al. (2004) contend that employability enhances an individual's likelihood of gaining employment, although it does not assure actual employment. Harvey (2001) argues that employability is not a set of skills but a range of experiences and attributes developed through higher-level learning, thus employability is not a product' but a process of learning. Employability continues to develop because the graduate, once employed, does not stop learning (i.e. continuous learning).

Thus employability by this definition is about learning, not least learning how to learn, and it is about empowering learners as critical reflective citizens (Harvey, 2001). Berntson (2008), also stressed that employability refers to an individual's perception of his or her possibilities of getting new, equal, or better employment. Berntson's study differentiates employability into two main categories – actual employability (objective employability) and perceived employability (subjective employability).

### **Concept of Skills for Excellence vis-a-vix Employed/Employability**

Merely being in possession of employer- relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes is not enough for an individual to either ‘move self-sufficiently’ in the modern labour market or ‘realise their potential’. People also need the capability to exploit their assets, to market them and sell them.

According to Nauta et al (2009), an individual’s ‘employability assets’ comprise their knowledge (i.e. what they know), skills (what they do with what they know) and attitudes (how they do it). There are a number of detailed categorisations in the literature which, for instance, distinguish between: ‘**baseline assets**’ such as basic skills and essential personal attributes (such as reliability and integrity). ‘**intermediate assets**’ such as occupational specific skills (at all levels), generic or key skills (such as communication and problem solving) and key personal attributes (such as motivation and initiative), and ‘high level assets’ involving skills which help contribute to organizational performance (such as team working, self- management, commercial awareness etc.).

Career management skills and life skills — commonly identified as self- awareness (i.e. diagnosing occupational interests and abilities), opportunity awareness (knowing what work opportunities exist and their entry requirements i.e. labour market knowledge), decision-making skills (to develop a strategy of getting from where you are to where you want to be) and transition skills. Job search skills, i.e. finding suitable jobs, access to formal and informal networks are an important component of job search and employability.

There is obviously an important inter- relationship between assets and deployment. The extent to which an individual is aware of what they possess in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes and its relevance to the employment opportunities available may affect their willingness to undertake training and other activities designed to upgrade their skills etc.

Another key aspect of employability is being able to get a particular job, once identified — sometimes included under career management skills, but is given prominence as a separate element here due to its crucial importance to securing employment. It centres around the ability to demonstrate ‘employability’ assets and present them to the market in an accessible way. This includes: the presentation of CVs etc., (including Records of Achievement) the qualifications individuals possess (both academic and vocational), perhaps accredited through prior learning references and testimonies interview technique, and, of particular importance, work experience/track record (Nauta et al, 2009).

### **Skills for Excellence in the Modern World**

All skills are skills, but some skills attract more employable than others, especially in the modern age where Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the order of the day. Becoming excellent in any skill chosen is relative depending on the effort put by the beneficiary and how certified he/she is. That implies that one can verge into a skill that is employable yet still remain unemployed, because of how efficient he/she turns out to be in the skill being acquired, that is where matter of excellence comes in, whatever thy hand find doing do it well as unto the Lord (Personal View). Experience is the Father of wisdom, meaning experience and knowledge result in better judgment (Glo Nig, 2014). The following are skills of excellence in the modern world by Ukaiké:

**Professional Stock Broker Skills:** A stock Broker is a professional who buys and sells shares (stock) on a stock exchange on behalf of clients in the exchange market (they



important agent in stock investment). May also, provide investment advice or company information, depending on the level of service chosen client. Stock brokers are license to practise. Professionally certified by, Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers (CIS).

**Professional Accounting Skills:** This is the development and use of a system for recording and analyzing the financial transactions and financial status of a business or other organisation. Mostly after graduation there is need to register for professional exams to make the skills saleable e.g Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), National Association of Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN), Association of International Accountants (AIA) etc.

**Networking Skills:** Networking can be defined as any interconnected group or system, therefore the system where multiple computers and other devices are connected together to share information and other resource is called networking. Ability to connect multiple computers is networking skills; they make use of wires and wireless devices. It can be acquired at the local level but for excellence and employability there is need to be part of a professional body like Cisco Networking Academy (CISCO) the world wide leading in networking, NIIT technology (NIIT) they specialised in all technological skills training.

**Computer Engineering Skills:** Computer Engineering is a discipline that integrates several fields of electrical engineering and computer science required to develop computer hardware and software. They usually have training in electronic engineering, software and hardware-software integration. It is the skills of designing computers from the stage of bring in together electronic circuit, to software and hardware. NIIT technology also certifies an individual, but you must have gotten degree, then register with some professional bodies in the field.

**Computer Maintenance Skills:** Computer maintenance skills do not require much of electronic engineering, it just the day to day up keeping skills of managing the computer system. Therefore computer maintenance can be defined as the practice of keeping computers in a good state of repairs, cleaning, creating a good backup system, disk cleanup, dust, having a better security, software updates, and application software management and installations. CompTIA A+ Certification, there exams covers maintenance of Personal Computers (PCs).

**Medical Skills:** This is a skill that pertains to the practice of human medicine, at graduation Medical Doctor does not lack work, and they are always needed. In fact at graduation they are already incorporated in a professional body that will give them certificate to practise, under the oath to be withdrawn if they go against their ethics. Of course you know u have to be science inclined to be a medical doctor.

**Nursing Skills:** Nursing skills is a profession acquired within the health care sector focused on the care of individuals, families and communities so they may attain, maintain, or recover optimal health and quality of life. Also at graduation they are already incorporated in a professional body that will give them certificate to practise, under the oath to be withdrawn if they go against their ethics.

**Electrical Installation Skills:** It is the same thing as electrical wiring. Its refers to as the skills of determining insulated conductors used to carry electricity, and associated devices,

electrical codes and safety, house cabling and electrical networking etc. Some learn at the road side, but to be excellent in it you must be a graduate of electrical engineering, whether at polytechnic or university.

**Software Programming Skills:** It is the act or process of writing computer programs, such as web designing, both system and application software design etc. By the help of some special computer programming language, like COBOL (Common Business Oriented Language), FORTRAN (Formula Translating System), QBASIC (Quick Beginners All Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code), HTML (HyperText Markup Language), EXCEL, JAVA etc. (Machine Language are set of symbolic instruction codes usually in binary form that is used to represent operations and data in a machine (as a computer) called machine code.)

**Architectural Design Skills:** Technical drawing and paper construction, the skills can be acquired, everyone builds and with the advent of Computer system, one can acquired skills without knowing how to do the free hand construction. And with God on your side, with such skills u will be a hot cake.

**Piloting Skills:** This skill is expensive and can be acquired under the school of aviation, but at graduation job is sure, skills of piloting plane, ability to manoeuvre the plane in the space. Mostly at graduation the beneficiary are certified by a professional body. Other includes: Professional Banking Skills, Professional Teaching Skills, Managerial Skills, Professional Office Management Skills etc.

## CONCLUSION

This write up is very critical owing to the time we are in, and the stage and age at which the recipient are, formation stage is indeed a critical stage and time, and God in His wisdom has allocated time for training for one to fit into his future (time allocation prior to the manifestation of our life assignment) expectation, and if the time is squandered, you might not have capacity to execute what you are born to accomplish. Therefore skills, excellence vis-a-viz employability do not take place over night, it start from when we beginning by channelling our time in doing the right thing and taking the right step in life. Working on our dreams and goal, knowing what we want and pursuing it with all vigour, our best can be realised in hard work and not laziness, slothfulness and procrastination and worldly affiliations.

## RECOMMENDATION

The paper therefore recommends that one should:

1. **Have a fore-sight:** Clear goals enable an individual raise head towards the top, putting into consideration employable skills in the society.
2. **Focus:** A burning desire and real determination, there are a lot of distractions; our attention should not be distracted from our set goals.
3. **Fight:** Attempt what seems impossible, fight on your knees in your secret place. Be determined to pay the price while it is time, don't procrastination.

4. **Feed:** Feed your mind with relevant resources and materials to help you achieve your goal, constantly improve on your chosen career to remain employable, people who studied in the 70s and 80s without keeping abreast with the current invention are obsolete.

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