



Entry-level Recruitment of University Graduates in Kenya: An Analysis of Service Sector Employers' Preferences

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Abstract: *This paper presents and discusses the results of a study whose purpose was to answer the question: which degrees, institutions, and recruitment channels do service sector employers prefer when selecting university graduates for entry-level positions in Kenya. The study was premised on the notion prevalent in employability literature that recruitment is the filter through which employers screen the work-readiness of their potential employees. Service sector employers were targeted because the sector is the highest provider of employment opportunities to university graduates in Kenya. The study was conducted in Nairobi. The study employed a concurrent triangulation design under the mixed methods research paradigm. The results of the study reveal that most service sector employers will employ a graduate with a Bachelor's degree without particular preference for any discipline. The study also revealed that most service sector employers have no particular preference for the university a job candidate studied in as long as the candidate is suitable for the job. Finally, the study revealed that the most commonly used recruitment channel among service sector employers is the advertisement-application-interview-recruitment process. Basing on these results, this paper recommends that; one, universities should design curricula that focus on holistic development of their students so as to produce well rounded graduates from whichever discipline; and two, universities should intentionally and purposefully engage with the world-of-work so as to bridge the gap between academia and industry requirements for each student since it is the individual student rather than the university whose profile matters more during recruitment.*

Keywords: *Recruitment, Employer preference, Employability, Service sector, Mixed Methods*

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1. Introduction

Much of the discourse on relevance in university education is focused on employability and narrowed down to the (mis)match between what universities teach their students and what the world of work expects from university graduates. While such focus is justifiable, it is

important to also appreciate the fact that recruitment is both filter and the feedback loop for employability. It is therefore critical to interrogate the dynamics of recruiting fresh graduates into the job market. This paper is premised on these dynamics. The purpose of this paper was to interrogate and document service sector employers' preferences when recruiting entry-level university graduate employees in Kenya. The research

question attendant to this purpose is: Which degrees, institutions and recruitment channels do service sector employers prefer when selecting university graduates for entry level positions in Kenya? The quest to answer this question led to this study underpinned by a needs assessment theoretical framework, where the preferences of employers are deemed to be the needs of enterprises that should be satisfied by the credentials of university graduate job seekers.

2. Literature Review

One of the oldest ‘constants’ in the relationship between universities and employers is the recruitment of fresh university graduates. Recruitment is a deliberate and carefully planned process through which an employer attracts, selects and appoints one or more individuals who satisfy the needs and requirements of an organization. In essence, then, “recruitment is the process of choosing the right person for the right job at the right time” (Tutorials point, 2016, p.5). Recruitment has two distinct components: the employer – the recruiting organization’s culture, its profile, and its specific expectations for the position or job in question; and the potential employee – in this case the fresh university graduate’s employability attributes. Recruitment, ultimately, is the dove-tailing of the potential employee’s profile with the employer’s profile (Hayton, 2018).

There are two types of recruitment: internal recruitment, where an organization seeks to fill vacant positions by sourcing individuals from within the organizations; and external recruitment, where an organization seeks to fill vacant positions by sourcing individuals from outside the organization. Internal recruitment has to do with individuals who are already employed in the same organization. External recruitment, on the other hand, has to do with either individuals who are employed in other organizations, or with individuals who are just joining the world of work, in other words, fresh graduates. The latter category of individuals is the focus of this study.

In order to attract and secure fresh graduates who will fit into the employer’s profile and therefore ultimately add value to the organization, a carefully thought-out recruitment strategy is necessary. The Graduate Recruitment Bureau (GRB) in the United Kingdom asserts that such a strategy is crucial because of three reasons. One, organizations must recruit graduates who match their business needs and who will add value to the organization as soon as they join it. Two, due to the annual progressive increase of the population of graduates getting into the entry-level job market, the competition for high caliber individuals is getting more intense. This is, in a sense, a talent war. Three, with the increasing

incidences of graduates from a broad range of disciplines going into diverse career paths, it can be easy for an organization to miss talented individuals if it is using outdated and/or rigid recruitment methods (GRB, n.d.).

Strategic recruitment of fresh university graduates is based on certain employer preferences which, as the literature indicates, are generic across sectors and even countries (Jun, 2017; Pollard, Hirsch, Williams, Buzzeo, Marvell, Artess, Redman & Ball, 2015; Waihenya, 2020). The most recurrent of these preferences include:

- University preferences – traditionally, employers have preferred recruiting graduates from certain specific universities. The reasons for these preferences include: one, the reputation and prestige of a university which is usually determined, from the employers perspective, through the age of the university (the older, the more established, hence the better), the university’s ranking, and the university’s technical content and academic rigor as perceived by the employer; two, the geographical proximity of the university to the employing organization (usually, the closer, the better); and three, the relationship, or lack of it, that the university has with the organization (most employers would prefer to recruit graduates of universities with which they have university-industry collaboration) (Jun, 2017; Pollard et al., 2015; Waihenya, 2020)

However, this tradition has come under scrutiny in recent times. Many top employers, especially in Europe, are beginning to disregard ‘educational prestige’ of the university in favor of the graduate attributes of the individual. In fact, many employers are adopting ‘education blind’ applications, where the university in which an applicant studied is hidden, to prevent probable bias on the side of recruiters (Murray, 2017).

- Subject/discipline of study – while most employers are open to employing graduates from any discipline (Harvey, 2000; Lowden, Hall, Eliot, & Lewin, 2011; Pollard et al., 2017), employers in highly specialized or technical fields, for instance Engineering, medicine, IT prefer graduates with relevant specialized degrees (Murray, 2017; Pollard et al., 2015).

- Specific class of the degree – the notion that a graduate’s intellectual ability is best denoted by their scores in the degree program. A first class or second class upper division degree is therefore preferred by the employers. However, this is increasingly becoming a “tricky issue for employers” because they are “not sure whether class of degree was a reliable indicator of quality across different institutions” (Murray, 2017, p.76). As such, employers are increasingly overlooking the class of the degree and focusing more on the employability profile of the graduate.
- Other considerations – these include the applicant’s sex, ethnic and socio-cultural background, and disability (for purposes of affirmative action and equity in employment).
- Sourcing recruitment candidates from professional bodies or employer associations
- Networking with university careers services
- Referral through social networks such as friends and family (an informal yet common and ‘powerful’ channel) (Breugh, 2009; Dyson, 2020; GRB, n.d.; Hayton, 2018; Johnson, 2019; Jun, 2017 Pollard, et al., 2015; Tutorial point, 2016)

It is important to note that employers typically adopt a multi-channel approach when recruiting graduates, and that virtually all these channels funnel the short-listed candidates into interview (whether face to face or virtual) from which the selected individuals are appointed to fill the vacant position(s) (Pollard et al., 2015).

Closely related to the preferences are the channels that employers use to source fresh graduates for entry-level recruitment. Just like the preferences, these channels are generic. A perusal of the literature shows the following most recurrent channels for recruitment:

- Direct recruitment (factory gate recruitment’ or ‘walk-in job seekers’)
- Advertising job vacancies on public on-line platforms such as job boards
- Posting job advertisements on corporate websites
- Posting job advertisements on social media
- Using employee referrals to source recruitment candidates
- Outsourcing recruitment to employment agencies and recruitment bureaus
- Holding campus career fairs and events
- Networking with university alumni groups
- Networking with campus academic departments, clubs and societies
- Offering employment to selected student interns
- Advertising in the mass media, especially newspapers

3. Methodology

3.1 Research paradigm

This study was guided by pragmatist ontological and epistemological postulations which logically lend themselves to a mixed methods research paradigm. This study adopted the mixed methods research paradigm because of the following seven characteristics of the paradigm: complementarity – to integrate two different but connected answers to a research question, one reached via a quantitative approach and the other via a qualitative one; completeness – to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by quantitative and qualitative perspectives; development – to use the first phase of a study to obtain research questions, data sources or sampling frameworks for the second phase of a study; expansion – elaborating on the information obtained in an earlier phase of the study; corroboration/confirmation – to determine the integrity of inferences obtained from a strand of a study by means of integrated methods; compensation – to compensate for the weaknesses of one method via the strengths of the other; and diversity – to compare and contrast divergent representations of the same phenomena (Tashakkori & Newman, 2010).

The mixed methods paradigm is therefore a comprehensive methodology whose defining characteristics include:

- i. Research questions that call for real-life contextual understanding and multi-level perspectives
- ii. Deliberate integration or combination of multiple methods to draw on the strengths of each method

- iii. The use of rigorous Quantitative (QUAN) methods to assess the magnitude and frequency of constructs and rigorous qualitative (QUAL) methods to explore the meaning and understanding of constructs within the same research project
- iv. A research design that clearly specifies the sequencing and priority that is given to the QUAN and QUAL elements of data collection and analysis
- v. An explicit explanation in which the QUAN and QUAL aspects of the research relate to each other, with heightened emphasis on the manner in which triangulation is used
- vi. Situating the research within defined philosophical and theoretical frameworks
- vii. Pragmatism as the philosophical underpinning for the research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Morgan, 2014; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007).

3.2 Research design

In line with this mixed methods paradigm, this study was conducted using a concurrent triangulation research design. The concurrent triangulation design is characterized by the concurrent collection of quantitative (QUAN) and qualitative (QUAL) data, done during a single phase of a study. This is then followed by the comparison of the two databases to determine if there is convergence, divergence, or discrepancy in the findings of the study. Concurrent triangulation is the preferred design when a researcher wishes to employ different methods in seeking “to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study” (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann and Hanson, 2003, p.183).

3.3 Data collection instruments

In the current study a quantitative instrument, the ‘Employability Rating and Perception Questionnaire for Employers’ (ERPEQUE) and two qualitative ones, the ‘Employability Key Informant Interview Guide’ (EKIIG) and the ‘Employability Document Analysis Guide’ (EDAG) were used to collect and/or generate data.

3.4 The Study Setting

This study was conducted in the city of Nairobi. Nairobi is the largest and most cosmopolitan urban center in Kenya, with an estimated population of over four million people. The city serves as both the administrative and the commercial and industrial capital of Kenya. As a result, Nairobi has the single largest concentration of university graduate employees in Kenya. Furthermore, most of the service sector firms and organizations in Kenya are headquartered in Nairobi (ROK, 2015). This means that the target population for this study was found in Nairobi. This is the reason why Nairobi was deemed to be the ideal setting for this study.

3.5 Sample Size

The target population of this study was 9639 service sector employers in Nairobi, and three umbrella organizations. For the purposes of collecting quantitative data, and because all the 9639 employers could not feasibly be included in the study, it was necessary to work with a sample population to represent the 9639. To obtain this sample population, a sample size had to be determined.

The sample size for this study was calculated using the Sample Size Calculator, a public service of The Survey System version 12.0, which is a survey research software designed by Creative Research Systems of California, USA. The calculator is available at <https://surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm#one>

The parameters used in the calculation of the sample size and the calculated sample size are indicated in table 1 below:

Table 1: Sample Size Calculation

Population	9639
Confidence level	95%
Confidence interval	5%
Calculated sample size	369

In order to confirm the validity of this calculated sample size, the same parameters were fed into two other sample size calculating engines; one, Survey Monkey, available

at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator>; two, Raosoft Inc. available at

www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html?nosurvey. Both produced the same result, a sample size of 369.

In line with the mixed methods procedures and for the purpose of triangulation, it was necessary to generate qualitative data. To achieve this, one representative from each of the three umbrella organizations to which service

sector employers belong (The Federation of Kenya Employers, the Kenya Private Sector Alliance, and the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry) was selected to be a Key Informant Interviewee. Thus, the total study population was 372. Table 2 below shows the sampling frame and the sample size:

Table 2: Sampling Frame and Sample Size

Target population for questionnaires	9639
Target population for interviews	3
Study population for questionnaires (sample size)	369
Study population for interviews (census)	3
Total study population	372

To obtain a sample for Document Analysis, an internet search was carried out. The scope of the search was narrowed to policy documents and research reports from the Government of Kenya and Regulatory organizations. The key search parameters were: 1) employability policies in Kenya; 2) university curriculum and

employability in Kenya; and 3) university – industry linkages in Kenya. The search yielded 36 documents. These documents were then appraised using four criteria namely authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and significance (Morgan, 2022). A final sample of 20 documents was obtained from this appraisal process.

Table 3: Documents for Document Analysis

Code	Document
D1	British Council (2016). Universities, employability and inclusive development: repositioning higher education in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa.
D2	Federation of Kenya Employers (2023). Skills needs survey report.
D3	International Labour Organization (2021). Assessment of public employment services and active labour market policies in Kenya.
D4	International Labour Organization (2023). ILO youth country brief: Kenya technical report.
D5	Kenya National Qualifications Authority (2019). Kenya National Qualifications Framework.
D6	Khainga, D. & Mbiti, J. (2018). Employment distribution of youth graduates across sectors in Kenya. Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), Discussion paper no.214
D7	Republic of Kenya (2013a). Second Medium Term Plan 2013-2017.
D8	Republic of Kenya (2013b). Sessional Paper no. 4 of 2013 on Employment policy and strategy for Kenya.
D9	Republic of Kenya (2014). Basic report of the survey on youth employment in Kenya.
D10	Republic of Kenya (2015b). National youth empowerment strategy 2015-2017: a flagship project of vision 2030 Medium Term Plan II 2013-2017.
D11	Republic of Kenya (2016). National Employment Authority Act N0. 3 of 2016.
D12	Republic of Kenya (2018a). National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2018-2022.
D13	Republic of Kenya (2018b). Third Medium Plan 2018-2022.
D14	Republic of Kenya (2019). Kenya Youth Development Policy.
D15	Republic of Kenya (2020). National Skills Development Policy.
D16	Republic of Kenya (2022). Employer Skills and Occupations Survey (ESOS) basic report.
D17	Republic of Kenya (2023). The Universities Regulations 2023.
D18	Republic of Kenya (2024). Fourth Medium Term Plan 2023-2027.
D19	Samuel Hall/British Council (2017). Youth Employment in Kenya: Literature review.
D20	World Bank (2019). Improving higher education performance in Kenya: A policy brief.

3.6 Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data/information were collected and generated in this study. The quantitative data were analyzed both descriptively and inferentially, while the qualitative information was analyzed thematically. The quantitative and qualitative data analyses were conducted concurrently, and the findings were reported comparatively within the framework of the Concurrent Triangulation design. The results from this data analysis are presented in section 4.0.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study was guided by the following ethical considerations: informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, avoidance of harm, and appropriate language use.

4. Results and Discussion

In line with the purpose of this study, the research question, ‘which institutions and recruitment channels do service sector employers prefer when selecting university graduates for entry level positions in Kenya?’ was posed. To answer this question, the ERPEQUE, EKIIG and EDAG sought responses on three items: the preferred minimum entry level qualifications of the graduates, the preferred recruitment channels, and the preferred universities from which to recruit graduate employees.

4.1 Minimum entry level qualification

The respondents were asked to state the preferred minimum entry level qualification for university graduates joining their firm. The ERPEQUE responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Minimum Entry Level Qualification for Graduate Employees

Minimum entry-Level qualifications	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor’s degree in any discipline	146	40.4
Bachelor’s degree in a specific discipline	113	31.3
Bachelor’s degree plus some postgraduate qualifications	16	4.4
Bachelor’s degree plus professional qualification e.g. CPA	40	11.1
Bachelor’s degree plus some relevant work experience	46	12.7
Total	361	100.0

The data in Table 4 indicates that the most preferred minimum entry-level qualification by employers is a Bachelor's degree in any discipline at 40.4 % (146), while the second most preferred, at 31.3% (113) was a Bachelor’s degree in a specific discipline. The other three qualifications are not preferred by a majority of the employers.

This preference for a Bachelor’s degree in any discipline was also indicated by all the three respondents to the EKIIG. Their responses are presented below:

Employers, especially in the service sector, are increasingly viewing a degree, any degree, as the threshold for considering an applicant for recruitment. It doesn’t really matter what the specialization is. Possession of a degree says I have the ability to learn, to manage myself and grow. (EKIIa)

A majority of our members have no particular preference for a job specific degree when recruiting fresh university graduates. However, those who insist on a job specific degree are usually looking for employees to fill technical or highly specialized positions. (EKIIB)

A Bachelor’s degree is just an indicator that the candidate an employer is looking for has the intelligence and exposure to adapt to the working environment. The degree gets a candidate to be shortlisted for interview. Most employers rarely dwell on the degree during the interview. They are more interested in who the candidate really is and what he or she can actually deliver if employed. (EKIIC)

In response to the EDAG, four documents (D1, D2, D5 & D6) directly addressed the issue of minimum entry level qualifications of graduate employees. In all these

documents there is consensus that an undergraduate degree is the basic entry point into the workplace for most professional and technical occupations in the workplace. More specifically, it is asserted that employers in Kenya perceive “the quality of education and training received by graduates not just in terms of the mastery of content exhibited, but also in terms of other attributes not directly related to the subject content” (D1, p.49). This means that for employers, the accent is not on the degree specialty, but on the possession of a degree. This is congruent with the findings from the ERPEQUE and the EKIIG.

This shift toward employers’ non-preference of discipline specific bachelor’s degrees is indeed a perceptible trend across the world (Artes, Hooley & Mellors-Bourne, 2017; Harvey and Knight, 2003; Karim, 2015; Lowden, et al., 2011; Nawaz, 2013; Pollard et al, 2015; Smith and Ridout, 2007). It is commonly being observed that “most employers see a degree as a proxy for achieving a certain level of competence that represents the minimum standard that they are seeking in a new recruit” (Lowden, et al., 2011, p.5). Harvey and Knight (2003) identify ‘knowledge of the subject or related profession’ as one of the personal attributes for employability, but they are quick to clarify thus:

Often, though, this is not seen as particularly important in its own right by employers – rather they see it as a vehicle for the development of

other attributes. In some areas, such as medicine and engineering, subject knowledge is regarded important but the key is the understanding of core principles rather than specific knowledge. Given the fragmentation of disciplines, the vast amount of knowledge and information in every field and the rapid rate of change, knowing how to find out things is more important than knowing things. (p.7)

In a study on graduates’ employability in the United Kingdom, Karim (2015) comes to the conclusion that “graduate recruiters look beyond qualifications and look for qualities that prepare [graduates] to adjust to the pressures of their job in an uncertain and competitive business environment.” Hence, “the recruiters seek for graduates who are motivated, flexible, pragmatic, dynamic, responsible, intellectually aggressive and able to work independently and in a team” (p. 18).

4.2 Preferred Recruitment Channels for Selecting University Graduates

The respondents were also asked to state which recruitment channels they prefer when selecting university graduates for appointment in their firm. The responses from the ERPEQUE are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Preferred Recruitment Channel for Selecting University Graduates

Response	Frequency	Percent
Through the advertisement-application-interview-recruitment process	200	55.4
Job seekers come by themselves to the firm’s premises	4	1.1
Through employment agencies	49	13.6
Through university careers services	12	3.3
Through the internship-recruitment process	96	26.6
Total	361	100.0

From table 5 it is evident that the most preferred recruitment channel according to employers is the advertisement-application-interview-recruitment process which is used by more than half (55.4%) of all the respondents. The second most preferred channel is the internship-recruitment process (26.6%), followed by sourcing recruits through employment agencies (13.6). The other two channels, recruiting “through university careers services’ (3.3%) and recruiting ‘job seekers who come by themselves to the firm’s premises’ (1.1%) are

apparently not commonly used by employers. The significantly low usage of the recruitment through university careers services channel is a telling indictment of the poor nexus between employers and universities in Kenya. Elsewhere in the world, this is a vibrant and popular channel for recruiting fresh graduates (Rehman and Mazhar, 2016).

On this item, the EKIIG elicited the following concurring responses from the three key informant interviewees:

Recruitment in Kenya is still rather conservative. Most employers advertise positions in mainstream media, then they go through a rigorous process of elimination through shortlisting applicants who appear for formal interviews. The successful candidate or candidates depending on the number required are then hired on the basis of performance in the interviews. (EKIIa)

Many employers prefer to conduct face to face interviews which lead to employment. Lately, some employers are taking the on-line interview route. Usually the jobs are advertised in newspapers or in the company websites or both. (EKIIb)

Different employers use different modes of recruitment depending on their needs. For our members, the variety includes the written application then interview then recruitment process, retention of outstanding students during industrial attachment, and let's be honest, referrals from the high and mighty. We are yet to fully exploit the more creative recruitment methods that are common in the developed world, although locally the telcos are going that direction. (EKIIc)

The EDAG yielded similar findings. Three documents (D3, D11 & D16) addressed the issue of recruitment channels, and they indicated that the most commonly utilized channels for recruitment were advertisements in social media, official websites of organizations and newspapers, and recommendations from personal contacts. The salient finding from the documents is therefore that employers in Kenya mostly “offer employment promotion through advertisement of jobs” (D3, p.13).

Most of the available literature on this item is from the developed world, especially the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Australia, and, to a lesser degree, from parts of Asia. The literature identifies traditional channels of recruitment such as newspaper advert-application-interview, outsourcing to employment agencies, direct employment from campus to especially government positions, sourcing through internships and other placements of students in industry through work-experience programs, and ‘factory gate’ recruitment – where jobseekers go by themselves to the firm and get hired (Graduate Recruitment Board, n.d.; Karim, 2015; Rehman and Mazhar, 2016).

There are also new or emerging channels of recruitment such as organizational websites, using social media recruitment campaigns, on-line job boards, on-campus recruiting – which entails either sourcing recruits through university careers services or through campus career fairs (Breagh, 2009; Dyson, 2020; Graduate Recruitment Bureau, n.d.; Johnson, 2019; Pollard, et al., 2015; Rehman and Mazhar, 2016). Nevertheless, the findings from both the ERPEQUE, the EKIIIG, and the EDAG on this item indicate that most employers in Kenya still prefer the traditional channels of recruiting fresh university graduates for employment.

4.3 University Graduates Preferred

The study sought to determine the category of university graduates that the employers preferred when recruiting their entry-level graduate employees. There were four categories in this item; namely, employers who preferred recruiting public university graduates, those who would rather employ private university graduates, those who went for foreign university graduates, and those who had no particular preference when recruiting university graduates. The responses to the ERPEQUE are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: University Graduates Preferred

University Graduates Preferred	Frequency	Percent
Public university graduates	33	9.1
Private university graduates	102	28.3
Foreign university graduates	7	1.9
No particular preference	219	60.7
Total	361	100.0

Table 6 shows that the majority of the employers (60.7%) did not indicate a particular preference of the university

from which they recruit their employees, meaning they recruit graduates from any university as long as the

individual graduate satisfies their criteria for recruitment. On the other hand, 28.3 % of the employers stated that they preferred employing university graduates from private universities while 9.1 % prefer employing university graduates from public universities. Another 1.9% (7) prefers employing university graduates from foreign universities.

The EKIIG elicited similar and concurring responses from all the three interviewees:

Some employers would prefer private university graduates to public ones due to the personal confidence levels of the private university graduates, which are relatively higher than those of the public university graduates. However, it is frequently the individual profile of the interviewee rather than the university they attended that will finally convince the recruiters. (EKIIa)

As an employer, you are interested in the individual you wish to recruit rather than the university they attended. It is the individual being interviewed, not the university. Of course there could be biases especially depending on which university the interviewer attended, or on the general perception of a given university. Here the bigger, older public universities may to seem have an advantage. But many are the times when a candidate from a small university has outperformed those from the big universities, or a candidate from a private university has outperformed those from public universities. The reverse is also true. So really it is about the individual candidate. (EKIIb)

Private universities generally seem to be more in touch with what employers expect from them and they prepare their students accordingly. However, graduates from private universities are still very few, such that the labor force is largely populated with public university graduates. (EKIIc)

This item on university preferences was addressed by only one document, D1. The finding here is that while there are perceptions of the difference between the graduates of public and private universities, “employers consider not one but a combination of institutional characteristics when recruiting graduates. The majority of employers did not specify which institutional characteristics and the majority were non-committal” (D1, p.48). This is in agreement with the findings of the ERPEQUE and the EKIIG presented above.

A corollary finding from the EDAG is that there is apparently no policy focus on the issue of university preference by employers. The one document that addressed this issue, D1, is a research report. This could be indicative of a possibility that this issue is not deemed significant at policy level in Kenya.

There is the notion that prestigious universities afford their graduates a higher chance of employment (Pollard, et al., 2015; Waihenya 2020), a counter-notion that ultimately it is the individual graduate’s attributes, irrespective of the university they attended, that matter (Karim, 2015; Murray, 2017) and a middle-ground, pragmatic notion that the preference for either university or individual is a function of many factors, including but not limited to the specific job on offer, the alma matter of the interviewer(s), the past experiences of recruiting graduates from a given university, and the existence or lack of institutional links between the university and the employing organization (Oanda and Sifuna, 2016)

Nonetheless, while certain specialized sectors, e.g. engineering and science will still look favorably on graduates from particular institutions, there is a significant leaning, which has also been portrayed by the findings from the ERPEQUE, EKIIG, and EDAG above, toward unbiased recruitment. Murray (2017) explains that employers “are starting to introduce ‘education blind’ applications, where your school and university are hidden, to prevent any unconscious bias from creeping into the decision making process” (para.9).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study sought to determine which type of degrees, institutions and recruitment channels service sector employers prefer when selecting university graduates for entry level positions in Kenya. The findings of the study lead to the conclusion that most service sector employers would employ a graduate with a Bachelor’s degree without particular preference for any discipline. With regards to institutions, this study concludes that most service sector employers have no preference for the university a job candidate studied in as long as the candidate is suitable for the job. The study also concludes that the most commonly used recruitment channel among service sector employers is the advertisement-application-interview-recruitment process.

5.2 Recommendations

A couple of recommendations ensue from these conclusions. One, universities should design and enact curricula that focus on holistic development of their

students so as to produce well rounded graduates from whichever discipline. Two, universities should intentionally and purposefully engage with the world-of-work so as to bridge the gap between academia and industry requirements for each student since it is the individual student rather than the university whose profile matters more during recruitment.

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