

Tracing the Experiences of an Inaugural Postgraduate Distance Education Alumni cohort of the University of Zambia

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Abstract

In this study, we trace the experiences of an inaugural Postgraduate Distance Education Alumni cohort of the University of Zambia. The study is based on the University of Zambia and Zimbabwe Open University (UNZA-ZOU) Collaboration project whose first cohort of Postgraduate distance students were enrolled in 2014 and later graduated in 2016. Considering that the distance education at Postgraduate level was still in its infancy, there was need to learn from the first cohort to inform policy and practice. A qualitative approach using an adapted Online Google Form was applied targeting all the graduates in the first cohort out of which 24 participants volunteered to voice their lived experiences. The findings revealed that a significant number of those who participated in the study were promoted to senior positions after training while others retained their positions. Their views on the programmes were generally positive. However, there were a few concerns from some participants in the area of research supervision, quality of instructional materials among others. The study recommends the following: (i) UNZA-ZOU should seriously consider raising the profile of study materials by giving international examples and not just Zimbabwe based examples. Further, there is need to conduct a mini study which will focus on the employers regarding their views on the programmes.

Key Words: Tracer, Distance Education, University of Zambia, Zimbabwe Open University

Background

Tracer Studies also known as follow up studies seek to follow up graduates of Colleges and Universities (Ewell, 2005). The main reasons for conducting these studies are to have a feedback from graduates on the training they went through, checking on the relevance of the training and monitoring the programmes in order to improve them (Obanko and Shisanya, 2013). It is for these reasons that most Universities have embraced the use of tracer studies in their programmes. In August, 2014 the University of Zambia (UNZA) through the Institute of Distance Education together with the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) launched an educational collaborative project which is commonly known as UNZA-ZOU following the acronyms of the two Universities (Simui, Kasonde-Ngandu, Cheyeka & Kakana, 2018). Prior to the introduction of the UNZA-ZOU collaboration, the university of Zambia's distance learning mode was predominantly offering undergraduate programmes for a period of more than fifty (50) years, Simui, Namangala, Tambulukani and Ndhlovu (2018) and Mundende, Simui, Chishiba, Mwewa & Namangala (2016).

Since its launch, the project has been offering masters degrees through distance mode and DPhil programmes by research only. The project has had five graduation ceremonies. However, the impact of the project has not been known. It was in this vein, that it was agreed by the steering committee at one of its annual review workshops to conduct a tracer study to generate views on the graduates' lived experiences on the Programme. In a nutshell, the study sought to assess the graduates' employment status and the Programme value. These and many more necessitated conducting a study of this type so that there is empirical evidence as answers to the questions.

Statement of the Problem

Tracer studies are important because they provide information which may be used to improve the design and delivery of an

intervention. As at now, since the launch of the UNZA-ZOU project, we do not know its impact on the graduates' employment status. In short, we do not know how they are faring. If the study was not conducted, the project' short comings would not be known and it may continue at a status quo. The research problem for this study therefore, was what is the impact and value of the UNZA-ZOU programmes?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the impact and value of the UNZA-ZOU programmes.

Research Objectives

The study sought to:

- i. Establish changes in the employment status of the inaugural cohorts of graduates
- ii. Establish if the changes were due to the project's training and intervention;
- iii. Assess graduates' views on the relevance of the programmes.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What changes have taken place since the graduation of the inaugural UNZA-ZOU Postgraduate cohort?
- ii. Are the changes due to the project's intervention?
- iii. What are the graduates' views on the relevance of the programmes?

Scope of the Study (Delimitation)

The study was delimited to the 2016 UNZA-ZOU project graduates.

Significance of the study

As already alluded to in the background, Tracer studies are of great importance because they provide vital feedback to stakeholders. Hence, the findings of this study may be used by UNZA-ZOU to improve upon its collaborative programmes. In other words, the information gathered may be used to adjust the training.

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

In line with Misnia, Hasnaa, Mahmooda and Jamilb (2020), the human capital theory postulated by Schultz (1963) was applied to shed light on the current study. The theory suggests the significance of education in the development of people and the economy. To this extent, the quality of education and its associated facilities should be enhanced with the help of financial contributions. It is understood that education aids in the development of talents and potentiality of human beings. In other words, one's ability can be meticulously trained and manifested through education. In this vein, it is not a waste to invest in education. Thus, students are groomed into productive workers through education and should be seen as a form of human investment aimed at improving the economy at individual, community and national levels. The human capital theory is well suited to illuminate this study as the contributions of the UNZA-ZOU project was meant to contribute to the human capital development aimed at improving the economy at individual, community and country levels.

Limitations of the Study

In order to generate data, we used an interview schedule through an adapted Google form and engaged graduates across the country. However, the findings may not be generalized owing to the choice of the research design as well as the low response rate as only twenty-four volunteered to participate in the study.

Furthermore, the study only involved UNZA-ZOU graduates. The

employers were not part of the study. Hence, the absence in the report of the employers' views on the UNZA-ZOU programmes is necessary.

Review of Related Literature

In this section, we review related studies. The review is guided by two themes derived from the research objectives which were graduates employment status and their views on the relevance of the programmes they went through.

Since the end of 20th century most European Universities have added tracer studies in their research programmes to clarify the linkage between job market and study curriculum. They have used the information generated to inform their decisions on the design and delivery of their programmes. Some tracer studies are conducted in order to generate information bank for quality assurance. For example, in a study titled "University students' learning experiences,' Nuanced Voices from graduate Tracer Study at Moi University, Bandiru and Wahume (2017) conducted a research between 2010 and 2013. They used a survey design and the study's findings revealed that there were challenges in the teaching and learning activities at Moi University.

Some studies conducted focused on the development of methodological guidance for conducting tracer studies. An example of such a study was one by Schombury (2010) which culminated into the publication of a "Guide to Anticipating and Matching Skills and Jobs in the European Training Foundation Centre for Development of Vocational Training." Schombury is also the author of the "Handbook for Graduate Tracer Studies" which was published in 2003 by the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER – Kassel).

The Japanese Government in conjunction with the World Bank in a project titled "Japan – World Bank Graduate Programme" conducted a study in 2016 whose main objectives

were (i) to establish the graduate's professional career status, (ii) to determine the programme's influence on the industries in which the graduates were working and (iii) their contribution to national development. Out of the 5,318 graduates, 3355 were contacted via online and only 783 responded giving a retention rate of 23%. The findings were that the training they went through had improved their knowledge and skills and had contributed to the national development.

Obanko and Shisanya (2013) conducted a study whose title "Institutionalizing Tracer Studies in Higher Educations Institutions in Africa: the experiences of Kenyatta University." The information generated mainly was on the feedback from the graduates on the relevance of the University's programmes.

Between 2007 and 2011, the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER – Kassel) and fifty eight Germany Higher Education Institutions conducted a tracer study titled "Only Successful Graduates Respond to Tracer Studies: A Myth?" This was a German project Tracer Study. The study wanted to confirm the hypothesis "Only Successful Graduates Responded to Tracer Studies." The findings did not confirm it. In our study, the retention rate was low. Could this be attributed to this? (Heidemann, 2011).

Assisted by the International Centre for Higher Education Research, the Association of African Universities (AAU) under a sponsorship project conducted ten graduate studies between 1998 and 2004. The research was titled "Study Programme on Higher Education Management in Africa." This was a comparative study. All the countries that took part in the study used standardized survey instruments.

In the United States of America, Ewell in 2005 conducted a graduate study he named "Alumni Studies as Instruments of Public Policy: The US Experience." The study sought to assess practical knowledge and skills the alumni had acquired in the training and participation in and benefits from their engagement

with the university staff and their peers.

In Asia, Cheng Tan and French-Anold in 2012 undertook a study: “Employability of Graduates in Asia: An Overview of Case Studies.” The participants in this study were the graduates, Universities and employers. The findings of this study were interesting because both the graduates and the universities agreed that sufficient knowledge was acquired but to the contrary, the employers were of the view that the graduates lacked skills for employment. Nevertheless, the study concluded that universities were expected to nurture their students so that they become responsible, productive and innovative citizens. In this way, they will help in national development.

Between 1998 and 2001, the European Union financed a study which was named “Careers after Higher Education.” The study was actually initiated and coordinated by INCHER – Kassel. Nine Countries participated in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The findings culminated into a publication of a document titled “International Network of Graduate Survey” (CHEERS Surveys).

According to Păcurariu (2019), in his study on the ‘Integration of Higher Education Graduates on the Labor Market,’ a series of representative factors that influences the success rate on the labor market were interrogated among graduates from West University of Timisoara. The findings revealed a high level of satisfaction amongst graduates, despite the high level (over 40%) of total incongruence (vertical and horizontal) between the degree’s field and the actual workplace. In addition, most graduates were able to get a job in less than 6 months from graduation (58.5%), even more at 12 months’ post-graduation (83.9%) (Păcurariu, 2019).

Related to Păcurariu (2019), Egesah (2019) focused on ‘graduates’ voices: the link between university graduates’ study and job experiences in East Africa. Egesah (2019) attempted to answer if and how university training produces competencies applied at work, or if there was a mismatch between training and

work. The findings showed that there was a strong relationship between the field of study undertaken by graduates and their work. Graduates from Moi University and from East African Universities reported robust competencies acquired from their studies that are important for work. The study concluded that graduates obtained from university studies essential competencies that were relevant for work on the job market. Whereas this was the case in East Africa, it remains to be seen in Zambia through the current study.

In 2019, Fenta, Asnakew, Debele, Nigatu and Muhaba analysed the supply side factors influencing employability of new graduates at Bahir Dar University graduates on first-degree graduates from the 2015 and 2016 cohorts. They researchers used a stratified multistage random sampling to select 867 graduates out of a total population of 4208 graduates. Findings revealed that 79% percent of surveyed graduates were employed gainfully, with the majority (93%) having their first job related to their completed course. The time taken to find employment was from 1 to 6 months and the overall average duration of unemployment was 5.08 months. Sixty-five percent of graduates reported that they used a public advertisement to find their first job and 58% reported that their employers used examinations to select potential candidates (Fenta, Asnakew, Debele, Nigatu and Muhaba, 2019). Ratnaningsih's (2013) study focused on Open and Distance Education Systems to establish the acquisitions of soft skills among graduates at the University of Terbuka using a Tracer Study. The study employed survey and in-depth interviews to selected respondents and stakeholders. The attributes analysed were personal, interpersonal and situational skills. The findings showed that learning systems that are based on individual learning and tutorial did provide graduates with soft skills. Graduates and stakeholders perceived interpersonal skills as fair. In general, soft skills required at work were time management, self-confidence, problem solving, creativity and team-work.

Given the foregoing review of related literature, it is clear that emphasis is on the use of quantitative methodology and not qualitative approaches. Equally, Tracer studies were prominent in most universities within and outside Africa. However, little if any was reported in Zambian Universities. However, for this study emphasis is on the use of qualitative approaches to trace the lived experiences of graduates within Zambia. The use of a qualitative approach is preferred on account of the small sample available as well as being an inaugural cohort under study, the qualitative approach provided the appropriate tools to elicit in-depth experiences among alumni.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used the Qualitative research approach in which an interview schedule was used to engage an inaugural cohort of graduates via various online tools namely: WhatsApp, Email, Google Form and Facebook. This approach was preferred because the study sought to generate in-depth views from participants (graduates) regarding the UNZA-ZOU training. Hence the design was appropriate. The use of social media to generate research evidence was in line with Simui, Mwewa, Chota, Kakana, Mundende, Thompson, Mwanza, Ndhlovu and Namangala (2018).

Sample Size and Selection Criteria

A purposively selected sample of all the inaugural UNZA-ZOU Postgraduate alumni were selected out of which twenty-four participants volunteered to voice their experiences. To choose research participants purposively, an inclusion/exclusion criteria was applied. To be included as a participant, an alumni needed to have:

- i. Graduated from the University of Zambia

ii. Studied in the inaugural (2014 – 2016) UNZA-ZOU Programmes.

iii. A postgraduate alumni.

For details on the sampled participants, see table 1 below.

Table 1: Participants’ Profiles

Name	Date Data Generated	Sex	Programme	Age
01A	2018/01/26	Male	MSPL	46 - 50 years
02B	2018/01/26	Female	MBA	36 - 40 years
03C	2018/01/26	Female	MDEA	36 - 40 years
04D	2018/01/27	Male	MSPL	41 - 45 years
05E	2018/01/27	Male	MDEA	51 years & above
06F	2018/01/27	Male	MDEA	36 - 40 years
07G	2018/01/28	Male	MDEA	26 - 30 years
08H	2018/01/30	Female	MBA	41 - 45 years
09I	2018/01/30	Male	MDEA	41 - 45 years
10J	2018/01/30	Female	MSCC	Above 51 years
11K	2018/01/30	Male	MDEA	41 - 45 years
12L	2018/01/30	Male	MDEA	41 - 45 years
13M	2018/01/30	Male	MDEA	31 - 35 years
14N	2018/01/30	Male	MDEA	46 - 50 years
15O	2018/01/30	Male	MSPL	40 - 45 years
16P	2018/01/30	Male	MSCC	31 - 35 years
17Q	2018/01/30	Male	MDEA	40 - 45 years
18R	2018/01/30	Male	MSCC	36 - 40 years
19S	2018/01/30	Female	MSPL	31 - 35 years
20T	2018/01/30	Male	MDEA	31 - 35 years
21U	2018/01/30	Male	MDEA	46 - 50 years
22V	2018/01/30	Female	MSCC	Above 51 years
23W	2018/01/30	Male	MSPL	40 - 45 years
24X	2018/01/30	Male	MSPL	40 - 45 years

Note that the following abbreviated programmes above stands for: MSPL, Master of Science Peace Leadership & Conflict Resolution; MBA, Master of Business Administration; MDEA, Master of Education Management; & MSCC, Master of Science Counselling.

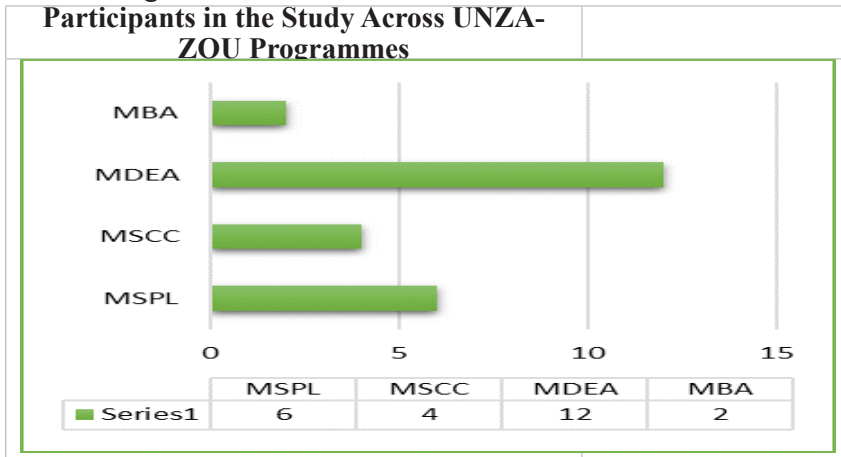


Figure 1a: Profile of Participants disaggregated by Programme & Age
Age Profile of Participants in the Study Across UNZA-ZOU Programmes

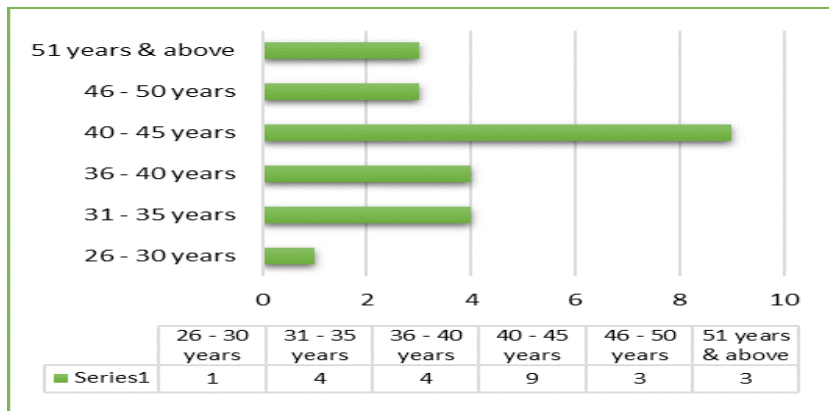


Figure 1b: Profile of Participants disaggregated by Programme & Age

Research Instruments

An interview schedule was designed by the researchers themselves to generate evidence from the graduates. This was supplemented by secondary data.

Data Generation Procedure

The University of Zambia graduation Handbook 2017 was used as a starting point in which names of graduates were compared to the initial list of an inaugural UNZA-ZOU registered students of 2014 as a way of ensuring accuracy. Once the names of graduates had been extracted, the researchers checked up each name on the Student Record Management System and extracted further contact details such as email addresses and WhatsApp contact numbers. The created interview schedule was then sent to all graduates in the target cohort using WhatsApp, Email, Google Form and Facebook tools. Adequate time of 3 months was given to the participants to share their experiences.

Data Analysis

Twenty-four volunteered and shared their experiences which experiences were collated and analyzed using emergent themes. The findings were then presented as verbatim.

Trustworthiness

Guba's (1981) four criteria was used to ensure Trustworthiness accordingly: (i) credibility, (ii) transferability, (iii) dependability, and (iv) confirmability. Data generation process was triangulated through the usage of multiple tools such as (i) Google Form, (ii) Facebook (iii) WhatsApp and (iv) Emails. The researchers applied a reflexivity technique to decode meaning from generated evidence. Further, data generation procedure and boundaries were documented to ensure transferability of the study

findings to different settings. Furthermore, since the findings were documented verbatim together with participant checks on the research, the study meets the dependability and confirmability criteria as well.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, ethical considerations were applied. For example, pseudonyms were allocated in place of actual names of the participants, to assure confidentiality and privacy (Cohen et al. 2000). In addition, only participants who willingly volunteered to participate were included in the study.

Findings and Discussions

The findings of this study were generated in response to the following research questions:

- i. What changes have taken place since the graduation of the inaugural UNZA-ZOU Postgraduate cohort?
- ii. Are the changes due to the project's intervention?
- iii. What are the graduates' views on the relevance of the programmes?

Employment Status since Graduation

Out of the Twenty-four (24), eight (8) had been promoted to higher positions while the rest retained their positions. It could as well be that a significant number among those who retained their jobs on account of their new qualifications obtained, short of which would have resulted in demotions.

Table 2: Employment Status since Graduation

Name	Job Title held Before Graduation	Job Title held After Graduation	Status
01A	Programme Manager, FAWEZA	GRZ- Diplommat	^
02B	Manager, Multichoice (Z)	Manager, Multichoice (Z)	>
03C	HOD, College, MOGE	HOD, College, MOGE	>
04D	Police Officer	Police Officer	>
05E	DESO, MOGE	DEBS, MOGE	^
06F	DRCC, MOGE	DRCC, MOGE	>
07G	Teacher, MOGE	Teacher, MOGE	>
08H	Manager, Plan Int. Zambia	Manager, Plan Int. Zambia	>
09I	Senior Teacher, MOGE	D/Head, Sec Sch	^
10J	Nursing Officer, MoH	Nursing Officer, MoH	>
11K	D/Head, Sec Sch	D/Head, Sec Sch	>
12L	Teacher, MOGE	Senior Lecturer	^
13M	Teacher, MOGE	Teacher, MOGE	>
14N	D/Head, Sec Sch	D/Head, Sec Sch	>
15O	Senior Prosecutor, NPA	Senior Prosecutor, NPA	>
16P	Teacher, MOGE	Teacher, MOGE	>
17Q	Teacher, MOGE	D/Head, Sec Sch	^
18R	Police Officer	Police Officer, Instructor	^
19S	District Officer, HIV/AIDS	Health Promotion Specialist	^
20T	District Officer	Lecturer	^
21U	D/Head, Sec Sch	D/Head, Sec Sch	>
22V	SEO, MOGE	SEO, MOGE	>
23W	Teacher/Catholic Priest	Teacher/Catholic Priest	>
24X	Senior HRM & Dev	Senior HRM & Dev	>

Key:

^	Promotion
>	Retention
<	Demotion

Overall, the noted contributions of UNZA-ZOU graduates are consistent with the World Bank (2016) Tracer Study whose findings pointed to the significant contributions of graduates to national development in Japan. In the same vein, the current study rhymes well with Misnia, Hasnaa, Mahmooda and Jamilb’s (2020) Human Capital theory as earlier suggested by Schultz (1963), that education contributes to the development of people and the economy.

Content Areas from Masters Programme Applied

Nearly all the participants acknowledged the usefulness of their masters programmes in the formal work engagements. For instance, when participants were asked to identify modules (subjects) areas within their Masters programmes they deemed very useful, 05E and 06F unanimously reported that all of them (modules) were very useful. This was equally reported by 08H who argued, ‘the entire MBA program is very useful in my current role’ (08H, 2018). However, others had specific modules that they felt useful in their operations such as

Table 3: Useful Content Areas at Work places

Name	Useful Content Areas
07G	Financial Management, Strategic Management and Politics in Education
08H	The entire MBA program is very useful in my current role
01A	Diplomacy and international relations
02B	Human Resource Management; Strategic Management; Economics for Managers; Corporate Integrity; Financial Management

04D	Conflict resolution, leadership, psychology of peace, research and diplomacy
10J	Very useful Programme especially the multicultural module
23W	I am using the knowledge in leadership courses and in preaching and pastoral activities

The findings above on the usefulness of the UNZA-ZOU programmes by graduates resonate well with Păcurariu (2019) and Egesah’s (2019) studies. Clearly, the competencies developed through the university training were applied at work by the graduates. Thus, there was a strong relationship between the field of study undertaken by graduates and their work.

Job Promotions Attributed to Postgraduate Training

Other than the usefulness of the programmes noted by participants in table 1 above, a considerable number of them clearly stated that their promotions on the job was attributed to their postgraduate qualifications obtained at the University of Zambia. For example, *19S* observed that, ‘I was elevated on account of recognition of the qualification I obtained via UNZA-ZOU’ (*19S*, 2018). In the same vein *17Q* attributed the rise in his salary to the qualification obtained. He noted that, ‘My salary scale was changed to degree scale and soon it will be change to Deputy’s scale’ (*17Q*, 2018). *11K* on the other hands noted that, ‘It is a valuable Programme because I am able to manage the office confidently due to the acquired knowledge (*11K*, 2018). Similarly, *18R* observed that, ‘it has made me do my work in a professional way and respect

the views of the criminals when investigating them (*18R*, 2018).

Equally, *17Q* noted that, ‘I am highly competent in management and supervision skills for the new position I am occupying’ (*17Q*, 2018). Furthermore, *12L* observed that, the Programme was ‘Highly valuable and practical...consequently changed my character and mindset’ (*12L*, 2018). All this could be attributed to the robustness of the curriculum and Programme delivery mechanisms in place as alluded to by *150* who argued that, the Postgraduate Programme was ‘well designed in terms of content and duration....’ (*150*, 2018).

Contribution to the Betterment of Humanity since Graduation

There were notable contributions to humanity made since participants graduated under UNZA-ZOU programmes. For instance, *02B* remembered having, ‘donating to Orphaned Children in need in terms of clothes/books/sanitary pads’ (*02B*, 2018). As for *04D* noted that he had participated in ‘Conflict management and peace keeping’ (*04D*, 2018). In addition, *06F* observed that she had, ‘... held several seminars with school management and provided on leadership and management of schools’ (*06F*, 2018).

Similarly, *09I* noted that, ‘I am Compete in management and supervision skills for the position I am occupying’ (*09I*, 2018). In the same vein, *14N* observed that, ‘in terms of the way I do things and respect from my subordinates despite the position remaining the same’ (*14N*, 2018). Further, *18R* noted that, ‘I am

now seconded in the United Nations for 2 years in Sudan' (18R, 2018). Furthermore, 19S observed that:

The MSc PLCR has consolidated my independent mind and opened my mind. Now able to think more critically and analytically. Now able to work better in teams. (19S, 2018).

19S' observations are consistent with Ratnaningsih's study on the acquisitions of soft skills among graduates (Ratnaningsih, 2013). It is clear that UNZA-ZOU graduates acquired soft skills as typified by 19S, 09I and 06F among others.

Areas of Improvements

Make Programme Practical

Notwithstanding the positives raised by the participants, a number of areas were highlighted that needed further improvements. This is consistent with Bandiru and Wahume's (2017) Tracer study at Moi University who noted that a number of needy areas in the teaching-learning processes as well. In the current study, 01A advised that, there was need to 'make the MSPL much broader by including practical examples from all over the world, other than limiting it to Zimbabwe (01A, 2018). Equally, 02B emphasized the need for making programmes on offer 'more practical...' (02B, 2018). Similarly, Simui, Thompson, Mwewa, Mundende, Kakana, Chishiba and Namangala (2017) advocate for inclusion of practical elements in the instructional materials to cultivate a

friendly outlook in the learning process among distance learners.

Allocate Competent Research Supervisors

In addition, *03C* requested the university to ‘allocate supervisors for research work who have a heart for the students, those who can really supervise not just mark the proposal and final report (*03C*, 2018). This was consistent with *12L* who advocated for use senior and competent members of staff. She noted that, ‘let the Programme be handled by Doctors and Professors to enhance quality education’ (*12L*, 2018).

Restructure Programme to allow for a complete year of dedicated of research

Further, *05E* observed that:

There should be a complete one year of research work without theory and examinations so that students produce quality research documents (*05E*, 2018)

05E's appeal was re-echoed by *06F* who advocated that, ‘some courses can be merged to give more time for research project’ (*06F*, 2018).

Allocate Competent Programme Coordinators

Equally, there was need to allocate competent Programme Coordinators as noted by *08H*. He lamented that,

So far the programmes being offered are great. However, management should look into the issue

of the Course Coordinators in some Programmes who have never been supportive....If it was within my powers, I would recommend that they be replaced immediately so that there's more sanity.... I rest my case!!! (08H, 2018)

Intergrade illustrations from other countries

There was need to widen the scope of illustrations used in the instructional materials instead of having only the Zimbabwean examples. For instance, 09I contended that,

The module on financial management ... should include the Zambian situation. Most of the modules we used were more on the Zimbabwean situation (09I, 2018)

Similarly, 13M advocated for 'domestication of study materials in the Zambian context' (13M, 2018). 09I and 13M observations resonate with Simui, Thompson, Mwewa, Mundende, Kakana, Chishiba and Namangala (2017) on distance learners' perspective on user-friendly instructional materials at the University of Zambia. In their study, Simui *et al* (2017) highlighted the critical importance of illustrations in instructional materials for distance learners.

Stop the Plagiarism syndrome

Further, there was need to stop the plagiarism syndrome among students as it was eroding the quality of education. This sentiment was noted by 14N who observed that,

Something should be done to stop the vice among

students to copy long papers from the senior students. One of my colleagues kept knocking at my door from the same and the whole issue damaged our relationship (*14N*, 2018).

Collaborate with other Partners

There was need to identify critical partners and collaborate with them for the sake of enhancing quality of delivery. For instance, *19S* advised that,

Collaborate with other institutions such Ministry of foreign Affairs, SADC and COMESA. Bring in more guest lecturers from these institutions to consolidate theory (*19S*, 2018)

19S' concerns were re-echoed by *24X* who noted that there was need to, '...collaborate with Zambia Institute of Diplomatic Studies, (*24X*, 2018). Equally still, *15O* retorted that there was need to '...collaborate with Zambia Institute of Diplomatic Studies' (*15O*, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is gratifying to find that UNZA-ZOU inaugural graduates were generally satisfied with the services provided by the university. The UNZA-ZOU project has had a high impact on the holistic development of graduates, in terms of Educational management, Leadership, Financial Management, Strategic Management and Human Resource Management. Equally, areas of enrichment are in Corporate Integrity, Conflict resolution, leadership, Counselling, Research and Diplomacy.

Concomitantly, this has resulted in a sense of self-readiness, maturity and teamwork. It is no wonder that a significant number of graduates were reported promoted to higher ranks while others retained their positions with none being demoted.

Recommendations

Given the fore-going, to enrich the existing Postgraduate programmes, the University should consider focusing on:

- i. Strengthening mechanism to make the programmes highly practical.
- ii. Allocate competent research supervisors and Programme coordinators in needy areas.
- iii. Intergrade illustrations from other countries in the instructional materials to make them user-friendly.
- iv. Further, there is need to curtail the Plagiarism vice by embedding anti plagiarism software in the online submission of assignments and research reports on the Learning Management System.
- v. Furthermore, there is need to collaborate with other Partners such as the Zambia Institute of Diplomatic Studies.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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