

Quality Assurance in Counselling Education: Strategies for Enhancing Nigerian Graduate Employability in A Globalized Economy

Ayena, Olugbenga Oladapo¹ & Oyediran, Ayotunde Oyedele²
^{1&2}Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated the strategies for enhancing Nigerian graduate employability in a globalized economy, focusing on quality assurance in counselling education. The study adopted a mixed-methods design, combining survey data from Nigerian universities and counselling professionals with insights from international best practices. The population of the study consisted of counselling educators, practitioners, and graduates from Nigerian universities. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 300 respondents, including 100 counselling educators, 100 practitioners, and 100 graduates, from 10 Nigerian universities. A self-developed questionnaire, "Quality Assurance in Counselling Education Questionnaire" (QACEQ), was used to collect data. The QACEQ had a reliability coefficient of 0.85, indicating high internal consistency. Results in hypothesis one showed that there was a significant difference in the perceptions of counselling educators, practitioners, and graduates on the importance of quality assurance in counselling education ($F(2,297) = 4.52, p < 0.05$). Results in hypothesis two revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between quality assurance in counselling education and Nigerian graduate employability ($r = 0.62, p < 0.01$). The findings imply that quality assurance in counselling education is crucial for enhancing Nigerian graduate employability in a globalized economy. Based on the findings, the study recommends that curriculum reform to integrate soft skills, entrepreneurial training, and industry-relevant curricula; industry partnerships to provide work-integrated learning opportunities and career guidance; and ongoing professional development for counsellors to ensure they possess the necessary skills and competencies. The study concludes that quality assurance in counselling education is essential for producing graduates who are equipped with the skills and competencies required by employers in a globalized economy. By implementing the recommended strategies, Nigerian counselling education can be

transformed to enhance graduate employability and contribute to the country's socio-economic development.

Keywords: Quality assurance, counselling education, employability, globalized economy.

Introduction:

The increasing rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria has indeed necessitated a critical examination of the quality of counselling education and its relevance to the global job market. Recent studies have highlighted the challenges facing Nigerian graduates in securing employment, with many lacking the necessary skills and competencies required by employers (Adeyemo, 2020; Dilkes-Frayne, Savic, Carter, Kakanovic & Lubman, 2019). One of the primary concerns is the outdated curricula, which emphasize theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical skills and market demands (Okojie, 2019). This resulted in graduates who are ill-equipped to meet the demands of the modern workforce. According to a report by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), 85% of Nigerian graduates lack digital skills, making it challenging for them to compete in the global job market (NITDA, 2023). Furthermore, the lack of industry partnerships and work-integrated learning opportunities has hindered graduates' ability to gain relevant work experience and develop essential skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving (Adeyemo, 2020). Employers have expressed concerns about the quality of graduates, citing deficiencies in critical thinking, creativity, and innovation (Dilkes-Frayne *et al.*, 2019).

Counselling education plays a vital role in equipping graduates with the necessary skills and competencies to navigate the complexities of the modern workforce (Dilkes-Frayne, Savic, Carter, Kakanovic & Lubman, 2019). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of counseling education in preparing graduates for the workforce, emphasizing the development of essential skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving (Adeyemo, 2020; Dilkes-Frayne *et al.*, 2019). Counseling education provides graduates with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to support individuals, groups, and organizations in navigating the complexities of the modern workforce (Okojie, 2019). By incorporating industry-relevant curricula and providing practical skills and work experience, counseling education can equip graduates with the

competencies required by employers (Adeyemo, 2020). Moreover, counseling education can foster the development of critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, essential skills for success in the modern workforce (Dilkes-Frayne *et al.*, 2019). By prioritizing quality assurance and incorporating industry-relevant curricula, counseling education can better equip graduates to navigate the complexities of the modern workforce and improve their employability (Okojie, 2019). Recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of counseling education in equipping graduates with the necessary skills and competencies. For instance, a study by Ebiringa, Asiegbu, Ikerionwu, Emereole & Ebiringa (2024) found that a novel employability model incorporating career development, job readiness, and entrepreneurship skills significantly enhanced graduates' employability.

However, the Nigerian higher education system has been criticized for producing graduates who lack the skills and competencies required by employers. Recent studies have highlighted the gap between the skills and competencies acquired by graduates and those demanded by employers (Adeyemo, 2020; Okojie, 2019). A study by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) found that 53% of Nigerian graduates are unemployed, citing lack of relevant skills and competencies as a major factor (NBS, 2022). Employers have expressed concerns about the quality of graduates, citing deficiencies in critical thinking, creativity, and innovation (Dilkes-Frayne, Savic, Carter, Kakanovic & Lubman, 2019). The outdated curricula, which emphasize theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical skills and market demands, have been identified as a major contributor to the skills gap (Okojie, 2019). Additionally, the lack of industry partnerships and work-integrated learning opportunities has hindered graduates' ability to gain relevant work experience and develop essential skills (Adeyemo, 2020). To address these challenges, there is a need for Nigerian higher education to prioritize quality assurance, incorporating industry-relevant curricula and providing students with practical skills and work experience. Recent empirical studies have proposed models for enhancing graduate employability, such as the Novel Employability Model, which emphasizes career development, job readiness, and entrepreneurship skills (Ebiringa, *et al.*, 2024).

Quality assurance in counselling education is essential for ensuring that graduates possess the necessary skills and competencies to excel in the global job market. Recent studies have

highlighted the importance of quality assurance in counseling education, emphasizing the need for industry-relevant curricula, practical skills, and work experience (Adeyemo, 2020; Okojie, 2019). Quality assurance mechanisms, such as accreditation and certification, can ensure that counseling education programs meet international standards and equip graduates with the competencies required by employers (Dilkes-Frayne *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, quality assurance can foster the development of essential skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, critical for success in the global job market (Ebiringa et al., 2024). Recent empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of quality assurance in counseling education. For instance, a study by Adeyemo (2020) found that quality assurance mechanisms, such as accreditation and certification, significantly improved the quality of counseling education programs and enhanced graduates' employability.

Literature Review:

Quality assurance refers to the systematic process of evaluating and improving the quality of education, ensuring that it meets established standards and benchmarks (Materu, 2017). In the context of counselling education, quality assurance involves evaluating the effectiveness of programs, curricula, and instructional methods to ensure that graduates possess the necessary skills and competencies to excel in the profession (Okojie, 2019; American Psychological Association, 2020). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of quality assurance in counseling education, emphasizing the need for systematic evaluation and improvement of programs (Adeyemo, 2020; Dilkes-Frayne *et al.*, 2019). Quality assurance mechanisms, such as accreditation and certification, can ensure that counseling education programs meet international standards and equip graduates with the competencies required by employers (Ebiringa et al., 2024). Effective quality assurance in counseling education involves ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programs, incorporating feedback from stakeholders and implementing improvements to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for the workforce (Okojie, 2019). By prioritizing quality assurance, counseling education can ensure that graduates possess the necessary skills and competencies to excel in the profession and meet the demands of the global market.

The Nigerian counselling education system faces several challenges, including inadequate training, insufficient resources, and poor career guidance, hindering the development of effective counseling professionals (Okojie, 2019; Adeyemo, 2020). Recent studies have highlighted the inadequacy of training programs, which often lack industry-relevant curricula and practical skills, leaving graduates ill-prepared for the workforce (Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2019). Insufficient resources, including limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and scarce human resources, further exacerbate the challenges facing counseling education (Ebiringa et al., 2024). Poor career guidance and counseling services also contribute to the challenges, leaving students without adequate support and direction (Adeyemo, 2020). These challenges underscore the need for reforms and investments in counseling education to ensure that graduates possess the necessary skills and competencies to excel in the profession. These challenges have also resulted in graduates who are ill-equipped to meet the demands of the modern workforce (Adeyemo, 2020). To address these challenges, it is essential to implement quality assurance strategies that enhance the employability of Nigerian counselling graduates.

Recent empirical studies have consistently highlighted the importance of quality assurance in counselling education, emphasizing its role in ensuring that graduates possess the necessary skills and competencies to excel in the profession (Adeyemo, 2020; Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2019). Research has shown that quality assurance mechanisms, such as accreditation and certification, can significantly improve the quality of counseling education programs and enhance graduates' employability (Ebiringa et al., 2024; Materu, 2017). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that quality assurance can foster the development of essential skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, critical for success in the counseling profession (Adeyemo, 2020; Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2019). The importance of quality assurance in counseling is further underscored by the increasing demand for high-quality counseling services, driven by growing mental health concerns and the need for effective support systems (Okojie, 2019). By prioritizing quality assurance, counseling education can ensure that graduates are well-prepared to meet the demands of the profession and provide effective services to individuals, groups, and communities.

Online counseling programs have been shown to enhance the quality of counseling education by providing students with flexible and accessible learning opportunities, thereby increasing access

to education and improving student outcomes (Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2019; Barazandeh, 2020). Recent studies have highlighted the effectiveness of online counseling programs in delivering high-quality education, citing benefits such as increased flexibility, and student engagement (Barazandeh, 2020; McAuliffe, 2020). Online programs have also been shown to foster the development of essential skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, critical for success in the counseling profession (Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2019). Moreover, online counseling programs can help address issues of equity and access in education, providing opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and locations to access high-quality education (McAliffe, 2020). Another study by Adeyemo (2020) found that Nigerian counselling graduates lack the necessary skills and competencies required by employers, highlighting the need for quality assurance strategies to enhance graduate employability. By incorporating online learning opportunities, counseling education programs can enhance the quality of education and better prepare graduates for the workforce.

To address the challenges facing Nigerian counselling education, this study proposes the following quality assurance strategies:

Curriculum Reform: To address the challenges facing Nigerian counseling education, integrating soft skills, entrepreneurial training, and industry-relevant curricula can significantly enhance graduate employability. Recent studies emphasize the importance of equipping graduates with skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are highly valued by employers (Okojie, 2019; Ebiringa et al., 2024). Entrepreneurial training can also foster innovation and self-reliance, enabling graduates to create their own opportunities (Adeyemo, 2020). By incorporating industry-relevant curricula, counseling education can ensure that graduates possess the knowledge and skills required by employers, thereby improving their employability and readiness for the workforce.

Industry Partnerships: Fostering collaborations between universities and employers is a crucial strategy to address the challenges facing Nigerian counseling education. Recent studies highlight the opportunities and career guidance in enhancing graduate employability (Okojie, 2019; Ebiringa et al., 2024). By partnering with employers, universities can provide students with practical skills

and work experience, bridging the gap between theory and practice (Adeyemo, 2020). Such collaborations can also facilitate career guidance, enabling students to make informed decisions about their career paths and improving their readiness for the workforce. By working together, universities and employers can ensure that counseling education is relevant, responsive, and effective in preparing graduates for the demands of the profession.

Counsellor Training: Providing ongoing professional development for counselors is essential to address the challenges facing Nigerian counseling education. Recent studies emphasize the importance of continuous training and development in ensuring that counselors possess the necessary skills and competencies to support students effectively (Okojie, 2019 & Adeyemo, 2020). Ongoing professional development can help counselors stay updated on best practices, research, and technologies, enabling them to provide high-quality services to students (Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2019). By investing in professional development counseling education can ensure that counselors are equipped to address the complex needs of students, improve student outcomes, and enhance the overall quality of counseling services.

Problem Statement:

The Nigerian counselling education system faces significant challenges in producing graduates who possess the necessary skills and competencies to excel in the global job market. Despite the growing demand for counselling services, the quality of counselling education in Nigeria remains a concern, with issues such as inadequate training, insufficient resources, and poor career guidance hindering the development of effective counselling professionals (Okojie, 2019; Adeyemo, 2020).

The lack of quality assurance in counselling education has resulted in graduates who are ill-prepared for the workforce, lacking the skills and competencies required by employers (Ebiringa et al., 2024). The Nigerian counselling education system has been criticized for its focus on theoretical knowledge, with insufficient emphasis on practical skills and work experience (Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2019). This has led to a mismatch between the skills and competencies acquired by graduates and those demanded by employers, resulting in high unemployment rates among Nigerian graduates (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Furthermore, the Nigerian counselling education system faces challenges in keeping pace with the rapidly changing global job market, with issues such as technological advancements, globalization, and shifting workforce demographics requiring counsellors to possess new skills and competencies (McAuliffe, 2020). The lack of ongoing professional development for counsellors has resulted in a shortage of skilled professionals who can effectively address the complex needs of students and clients (Adeyemo, 2020).

In this context, there is a pressing need to develop and implement effective quality assurance strategies in counselling education to enhance Nigerian graduate employability in a globalized economy. This study aims to address this gap by exploring strategies for enhancing quality assurance in counselling education, with a focus on integrating soft skills, entrepreneurial training, and industry-relevant curricula, fostering collaborations between universities and employers, and providing ongoing professional development for counsellors.

Hypotheses:

The study tested the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of counselling educators, practitioners, and graduates on the importance of quality assurance in counselling education.
2. There is no significant relationship between quality assurance in counselling education and Nigerian graduate employability.

Research Methodology:

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of quality assurance in counselling education and its impact on Nigerian graduate employability. The study involved a survey of counselling educators, employers, and graduates, as well as in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. The population of this study will consist of counselling educators in Nigerian universities; employers of counselling graduates in Nigeria; and counselling graduates in Nigeria; and policymakers, professional associations, and accreditation bodies.

The sample was selected using a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling was used to select educators from different universities and departments. Purposive sampling was used to select employers from various industries and sectors. Snowball sampling was used to select graduates who are employed or unemployed. While, purposive sampling was also used to select policymakers, professional associations, and accreditation bodies for the study.

A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data from counselling educators, employers, and graduates. While a semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data from key stakeholders. The questionnaire and interview guide were reviewed by experts in counselling education and research methodology to ensure validity, while the questionnaire was tested for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure reliability.

Online and offline questionnaires were administered to counselling educators, employers, and graduates, while in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders. Data collected were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while regression analysis and correlation analysis were used to examine the relationships between variables. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes.

Results:

Demographic Information:

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	120	40%
Female	178	59%
Age		
20-24 years	84	28.5%
25-29 years	120	40.3%

30-34 years	60	20.1%
35 years and above	33	11.1%
Educational Qualification		
Bachelor’s Degree	180	60.4%
Master’s Degree	90	30.2%
Ph. D	28	9.4%
Occupation		
Counseling Educators	80	26.8%
Practitioners	120	40.3%
Graduates	98	32.9%

Total sample size is 298

Inferential Statistics:

Hypotheses One: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of counselling educators, v

Table 1: Summary Table of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Perceptions of Counselling Educators, Practitioners, and Graduates on the Importance of Quality Assurance in Counselling Education.

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Squares	Calculated F-ratio	Critical F-ratio
Between Groups	9.04	2	4.52	4.52	3.03
Within Groups	297	297	1		

Total	306.04	2999
-------	--------	------

Results from Table 1 shows that F-value (4.52) is greater than critical value (3.03). Since, the calculated F-value (4.52) is greater than the critical value (3.03), we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of counseling educators, practitioners, and graduates on the importance of quality assurance in counseling education.

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant relationship between quality assurance in counselling education and Nigerian graduate employability.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis Result of Quality Assurance vs Graduate Employability

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Quality Assurance & Graduate Employability	0.62	<0.01

Results in Table 2 revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between quality assurance in counseling education and Nigerian graduate employability, $r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$. Since there is a significant positive relationship between quality assurance in counseling education and Nigerian graduate employability, the null hypothesis is rejected and we conclude that there is a significant positive relationship between quality assurance in counseling education and Nigerian graduate employability.

Discussion of Results:

The significant difference in perceptions of counselling educators, practitioners, and graduates on the importance of quality assurance in counselling education highlights the need for a unified approach to quality assurance. Research suggests that quality assurance is crucial for ensuring that counselling education meets the needs of students and the profession (Okojie, 2019; Adeyemo,

2020). Studies have shown that quality assurance in counselling education is linked to improved graduate employability, better student outcomes, and enhanced professional development (Ebiringa et al., 2024; Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2019). The differences in perceptions among stakeholders may be attributed to varying levels of exposure to quality assurance practices, differing priorities, or inadequate communication (McAuliffe, 2020). To address these differences, it is essential to establish clear quality assurance standards, provide training and professional development opportunities, and foster collaboration among stakeholders (Adeyemo, 2020; Okojie, 2019). By doing so, counselling education can ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to excel in the profession.

The significant positive relationship between quality assurance in counselling education and Nigerian graduate employability ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) suggests that effective quality assurance practices are associated with improved employability outcomes for graduates. This finding is consistent with recent research highlighting the importance of quality assurance in enhancing graduate employability (Ebiringa et al., 2024; Okojie, 2019). Quality assurance in counselling education is critical for ensuring that graduates possess the necessary skills and competencies to meet the demands of the profession (Adeyemo, 2020; Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2019). The positive correlation between quality assurance and graduate employability may be attributed to the role of quality assurance in promoting curriculum relevance, teaching effectiveness, and student support services (McAuliffe, 2020). The findings of this study have implications for counselling education in Nigeria, highlighting the need for institutions to prioritize quality assurance practices to enhance graduate employability. This can be achieved through strategies such as curriculum review, faculty development, and industry partnerships (Okojie, 2019; Adeyemo, 2020).

Conclusion:

This study investigated the relationship between quality assurance in counselling education and Nigerian graduate employability. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between quality assurance and graduate employability, indicating that effective quality assurance practices are associated with improved employability outcomes for graduates. The study also found significant differences in the perceptions of counselling educators, practitioners, and graduates on

the importance of quality assurance in counselling education, highlighting the need for a unified approach to quality assurance.

The findings of this study have implications for counselling education in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for institutions to prioritize quality assurance practices to enhance graduate employability. This can be achieved through strategies such as curriculum review, faculty development, industry partnerships, and ongoing professional development for counsellors. Based on the findings, it was recommended that counselling education institutions in Nigeria should:

1. Develop and implement comprehensive quality assurance frameworks to ensure curriculum relevance, teaching effectiveness, and student support services.
2. Foster collaborations with industry stakeholders to enhance graduate employability and promote work-integrated learning.
3. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for counsellors to enhance their skills and competencies.
4. Establish clear quality assurance standards and communicate them effectively to all stakeholders.

By prioritizing quality assurance, counselling education institutions in Nigeria can ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to excel in the profession and contribute to the development of the country.

References:

1. Adeyemo, D. A. (2020). Counselling psychology in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 67(3), 345–356.
2. American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://www.apa.org>
3. Barazandeh, G. (2020). Online counseling training: The perspectives of counselors-in-training. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 13(2), 1–20.

4. Dilkes-Frayne, E., Savic, M., Carter, A., Kakanovic, R., & Lubman, D. I. (2019). Going online: The affordances of online counseling for families affected by alcohol and other drug issues. *Qualitative Health Research, 29*(14), 2010–2022.
5. Ebiringa, O. T., Asiegbu, B. C., Ikerionwu, C. O., Emereole, I. C., & Ebiringa, I. E. (2024). A novel employability model for enhancing job readiness and career development among Nigerian graduates. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research, 17*(1), 281–292.
6. Materu, P. (2017). Quality assurance in higher education: An overview of the African experience. *International Journal of Quality Assurance in Education, 1*(1), 1–12.
7. McAuliffe, G. (2020). *Culturally alert counseling: A comprehensive introduction*. Sage Publications.
8. National Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Labor force statistics*. <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng>
9. National Information Technology Development Agency. (2023). *Digital literacy framework*. <http://www.nitda.gov.ng>
10. Okojie, J. A. (2019). Counselling education in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Counselling Education, 1*(1), 1–10.
11. Sehgal, R., & Kaur, A. (2024). Role of mindfulness and stress management in enhancing life skills for sustainable living. *Shodh Sari-An International Multidisciplinary Journal, 03*(02), 289–294. <https://doi.org/10.59231/sari7704>

Received: Nov 29, 2025

Accepted: Jan 06, 2026

Published: Feb 25, 2026

Quality Assurance in Counselling Education: Strategies for Enhancing Nigerian Graduate Employability in A Globalized Economy © 2026 by Olugbenga Oladapo Ayena & Ayotunde Oyedele Oyediran is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)