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In today’s world, the job market is a stiff competition of skills, certificates, and competencies, one that seems to be ever evolving. The dynamic nature of the job market is based on several factors, including technology, globalization, as well as other factors that make the requirements of job employment change according to time. The influx of university graduates, more recently, the over twenty thousand graduates provided from the [Lagos State University combined convocation ceremony](#), provides a fitting backdrop for examining the changing value of university certificates and the growing emphasis on practical skills, experience and competence in the workplace.

While it has been a staple from inception to gain employment based on the value of certificates, the world has since evolved and now has a place for competence and additional skills as job worthy factors. This begs the question of whether certificates overpower competence in the job market and why.

In a November 2013 edition of the Eko Akete Newspaper, an editorial piece on education was written and the topic of discussion was the value of certificates over competence. It highlighted the imbalance in Nigeria’s job market and the dismissal of character, skills, and other forms of merit in the considerations for employment. The only value required was having a good result on certificates.

Meanwhile for many of the graduates, the certificate represents years of lectures, examinations, assignments and academic training. It is also often seen as a major requirement for securing employment and advancing professionally. However, as graduates leave the university with certificates in hand, questions remain about how far academic qualifications alone can take them in an increasingly competitive labour market.

The write up explored the effects of that system on the lives of students, explaining the brutal means that students will go through to have a chance at the job market, including examination malpractice.

It addressed other issues, including industrial inefficiencies, where it was explained that the system of certificates over competence has been detrimental. It was described in the piece, which read: “Industrial inefficiencies in Nigeria can also be regarded to as termites that slowly eats up the progress of services rendered and the goods manufacturers in the industrial sector. In the industrial sector today,

wrong people occupy wrong offices and render wrong services to their clients.”

Referencing the convocation ceremony where the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, Abike Dabiri-Erewa, urged the graduates to pursue excellence and use their knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria’s development, it remains a wonder if such an impact can be made when even getting jobs for daily survival is a challenge in itself.

The editorial piece revealed reasons why those points, although valid were still not enough for employers to defy the system. To employers, the point of a certificate is to reflect the efficiency of a potential employee. It serves the purpose of informing the employers of the capabilities of a potential employee. The editor provided an internal perspective by adding the opinion of its CEO and current CEO of Eko Akete News Media, Mr. Dimeji Sina Saba, who stated that he employs workers based on recommendation and considers the certificate because that determines what employees can offer.

Noteworthy it is that the editorial was thirteen years ago, which means so many things have happened to change the state of things since then. Although that piece perfectly captured the issues of its time, the question now should be, can the same be said in 2026?

One of the many significant changes in the past thirteen years is the COVID-19 virus. The pandemic of 2020 changed the scope of employment and shifted the world to a gig economy, which marked the beginning of a great change in the job market.

From traditional on-site jobs to remote based jobs to online certifications and career redirections, all of these have affected job markets. In this world of tech based jobs that can be accessed and certified online, many have been found to pivot from the qualifications presented on school issued certificates to skills obtained online for employment. It goes further, platforms for jobs and connections such as LinkedIn now work based on the showcase of the competencies of individuals, not merely the qualifications conferred by candidates. Evidently, this represents the shift of the world from “what you say you can do to what you can actually do” or simply put, a transition to competence over certificates.

It is important to recognize that as progressive as this transformation is, it does not render certificates obsolete. In reality, the entire purpose of this write up is not to

prove that certificates are no longer useful because that would be false.

In conclusion, as people acquire skill sets for one reason or the other, certificates remain the proof of those skills and competencies. Therefore, the problem did not begin with the superiority of certificates over competency or vice versa. The problem began with placing one above the other at all, when both should be well balanced for better efficiency. The real lesson here is that the value lies in both certificates and competency.