

Schooling and Working, Working and Schooling: A Descriptive Study of the Challenges

Paul Adjei Kwakwa

Department of Business Economics, Presbyterian University College Ghana, Akuapem Campus, Akropong-Akuapem, Eastern Region, Ghana

Email: pauladkwa@yahoo.com

Hamdiah Alhassan

Department of Agricultural and Resource, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana

Email: abena567@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Some studies on the effects of employment on students' academics in the literature but little is known about the effects of schooling on workers who decide to school alongside their work schedule. This study therefore seeks to find out the challenges facing students who work and workers who study in Ghana. The results from 90 students of the Nyankpala campus of University for Development Studies in the Northern region of Ghana conveniently sampled show that majority of students who work, work for 1-15 hours a week while majority of workers who school, work for 16-35 hours a week. Working to support oneself on campus, gaining practical knowledge and supplementing family income topped the list of factors facilitating students' decision to work. On the other hand, workers who school have knowledge acquisition, degree acquisition, both better job and improve social status as the topmost reasons for schooling. Despite the positive effect of employment on students who work, they have to battle with class schedule, time for private studies and assignment etc. and workers who school also face the challenge of having little time to work and reduction in their leisure time.

Keywords: Ghana, higher education, University for Development Studies, Nyankpala and employment

Introduction

The importance of higher education to the individual, society and the nation as a whole is well noted in the literature (see Morley et al., n.d.; Shaw, 1998; Todaro and Smith, 2009; Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008; Goksel, 2009; PBE, 2011; and Kwakwa et al., 2012). To the individual, higher education enables one to get higher income, acquire jobs, get promotion at the work place and enhance social status among others. In the light of this there are a number of people who are employed but would enroll in a higher institution to upgrade themselves. Again, for

one reason or the other, some students of higher institutions seek jobs throughout the period of education.

Although the literature mentions the effects of employment on academic performance, little is known in Ghana. Furthermore, not much is known about the effects schooling has on employees who decide to enroll in schools while working. Thus the study is motivated by the fact that the challenges facing students who work or students-workers² are not known in Ghana together with the scarcity of knowledge in the literature about the challenges facing employees who study or employees-students¹.

Methodology

This research was conducted by using students from the Nyankpala campus of University for Development Studies, Nyankpala in the Northern region of Ghana. The choice of this particular location was motivated by the fact that it offered some level of convenience in conducting this research. Secondly, the Northern region is one of the poorest regions in the country and it is likely to have participants who may fit for the study. The study used a self-administered questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaires were distributed by research assistants during the second trimester of 2011/2012 academic year. Each questionnaire consisted of a mixture of closed ended questions (structured) and an opened question (unstructured) which enabled us to get the right information from respondents. A total sample of 90 students was selected by using the purposive sampling method. The data was analyzed using frequency distribution table with the help of SPSS.

Findings of Results

Demographical background of participants

Table1 below shows the demographic indicators such as the age and sex distribution, marital status and place of origin of respondents.

¹ Students who were working before enrolling and continue to work once they go to school. They view themselves as employees first and students second.

² Students who work after they have been enrolled in school. This working students view themselves as student first

Table 1: Demographic features of respondents

Age		
Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
17-24	20	22.22
25-31	50	55.56
32-39	20	22.22
Total	90	100.00
Sex		
Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	72	80.00
Female	18	20.00
Total	90	100.00
Marital status		
Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	26	28.89
Single	62	68.89
Cohabitation	2	2.22
Total	90	100.00
Place of origin		
Place	Frequency	Percentages
Tamale	18	20.00
Other place in the district	4	4.44
Other district in the region	10	11.11
Other regions	58	64.44

Out of the 90 respondents interviewed, 80 percent and 20 percent were males and females respectively. Majority (55.56%) was within the age bracket of 25 and 31 years and 22.22 percent were both within 17 -24years and 32-39 years. The plurality of the respondents (64.44%) was from other regions, followed by those from Tamale Township (20.00%) and those from other district in the region (11.11%). Less than 5% came from other place in the district. In terms of marital status, more than half (68.89%) of the respondents were single, followed by 28.89 percent who were married and 2.22 percent were cohabitating.

Students who work and employees at school

Table 2, shows the share of students who work and employees who study. Majority (62.22%) of students were employed before they enrolled (employees who study or employees-students)

whiles 37.78percent students were enrolled before they had a job (students who work or students-workers).

Table 2: Share of students who work and employees who study

Category of participants	Frequency	Percentages
Students who work	56	62.22
Workers of study	34	37.78

Employer of participants

Respondents were asked to identify the organizations that they worked with. From Table 3, majority (53.33%) of the respondents were self employed, 33.33 percent were working in Schools/Universities and less than 3 percent of the respondents were working in an NGO, Research institution, Telecom and Marketing.

Table 3: Type of employer

Employer	Frequency	Percentage
Schools/Universities	30	33.33
Research Institution	2	2.22
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	4	4.44
Telecom	2	2.22
Marketing	2	2.22
Self employed	48	53.33
NGO	2	2.22

Sector of work, status of job and location of job

A look at table 4 below shows that while 55.56% of the respondents are working in the informal sector there were 57.78% of the respondents working as full time. With respect to the location of their work, 57.78% of the respondents were working off campus, 24.44 percent had their jobs located both on and off campus and 17.78 percent had their job located on campus. With regard to the relationship between students' jobs and their academic interests, only 28.89 percent of students said their jobs were related to their academic course. "Employees who study" were more likely than "students who work" to report that their courses and their job were related (42.86 percent versus 5.88 percent). This implies that many employees who enroll choose course related to their careers.

Table 4: Sector of work, status of job and location of job

Sector of work		
Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Formal sector	40	44.44
Informal sector	50	55.56
Status of job		
Status of work	Frequency	Percentages
Full time	52	57.78
Part time	38	42.22
Location of job		
Location	Frequency	Percentages
On campus	16	17.78
Off campus	52	57.78
Both on and off campus	22	24.44
Job related course		
Status of students	Frequency	Percentages
Employee who school	38	42.86%
Students who work	5	5.88%

Hours of work

From table 5, majority (51.11%) of the respondents worked within 1-15hours per week, followed by 26.67 percent respondents who worked within 16-34hours per week and 22.22% worked within 35 or more hours in a week. It is evident that although more than 50% of respondents worked within 1-15 hours a week, ‘employees who school’ were more likely to work for longer hours (16 hours or more per week) than “students who work”.

Table 5a: Hours of work in a week by participants

Hours	Employee who school	Students who work	All participants
1-15	42.86%	64.71%	51.11%
16-34	32.14%	17.65%	26.67%
35 or more	25.00%	17.65%	22.22%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Motives for working after enrollment and for enrolling after job appointment

There are a number of possible reasons why student may decide to work and why employees may decide to enroll. In order to determine such reasons respondents were asked to select from a list their motives for working after enrollment and schooling after job appointment. Table 6, below informs that, the top three reasons why students worked, were to support

themselves on campus (88.24%), get practical knowledge (70.59%) and supplement family income (52.94%). Again, 47.06 % cited paying of fees as their motivation for working after they are enrolled and parents' influence/expectation was the least (11.76%) factor that motivated them to work after enrollment. On the other hand, employees who study said knowledge acquisition (96.43%) was the number one reason why they enrolled into school, followed by degree acquisition (92.86%), 89.29 percent said for both better job and improve social status. The least motivating factor for enrolling was for promotion (75%).

Table 6: Motives for working and schooling

Reasons why students work	Percentages	Reasons why employees enroll	Percentage
Pay fees	47.06	Higher Income	85.71
Support yourself on campus	88.24	Better job	89.29
Supplement family income	52.94	Improve social status	89.29
Practical knowledge	70.59	Knowledge acquisition	96.43
Parents influence/Expectation	11.76	Degree acquisition	92.86
Friends influence	23.53	Promotion	75.00

The Challenge of working and studying

Combing the two activities of working and studying pose some challenges to participants of the study. One way of analyzing this was to determine both the positive and negative effects of work on students' academic pursuits of which the outcome is presented in table 7 below.

Table 7: Effects of job on students who work

Positive Effect (%)	
Career Preparation	64.71
Course work advantage	58.82
Ability to pay fees	41.18
Support on campus	82.35
Negative effect (%)	
Class schedule	66.91
Class choice	56.83
Private studies	77.00
Assignment	44.33
Grade point	67.54
Access to school facilities	48.00

On the positive side, as high as 82.35% of the respondents said working after enrollment has supported them on campus, and another 64.71 percent believe it has helped them in their career preparation. More so, 58.82% said job after enrollment has let them gained course work advantage and less than half (41.18%) said it has enabled them pay their school fees. With

regards to the negative effects of job on students, an appreciable 77% respondent's said job has affected their private studies, 67.54% have their grade point affected, 66.91% said it has affected their class schedule and less than half 44.33% said job has affected their ability to work on their assignments.

The employees-students were also asked to state the challenge they faced. From table 8, the top four challenges of employees studying were little time for private study (89.29%), unsatisfactory grade point (82.14%), difficulty with class schedule (75.00%) and inability to have group discussion (67.86%). As low as 35.71 percent of 'employees who study' said work affect their assignment negatively. It is not surprising that "employees who study" rank grade point as the second highest challenge, because from table 5, "employees who study" are more likely to work for longer hours per week than "students who work" and this is can affect them negatively because hours spent at work take time away from studying - which may lead to lower grades. This finding is consistent with Furr and Elling (2000) who found that students working between 30-39 hours per week and those working 40+ hours per week felt that their employment had a negative effect on their academic achievement.

Table 8: Challenge facing employees studying

Challenge	Percentages
Little time for private study	89.29
Little time to work	60.71
Group discussion	67.86
Assignment	35.71
Grade point	82.14
Access to facilities	60.71
Leisure	60.71
Class schedule	75.00
Class choice	60.71

Discussion and Recommendation

The study has examined the challenges facing those who study and work at the same time in Ghana by using students of the University for Development Studies, Nyankpala campus, in the Northern region of Ghana. The results seem to confirm that employment may be becoming increasingly common among tertiary students. Thus in this study we found two categories of students – those who gained admission into the university before deciding to work alongside (students who work or students-workers) and those who were working and decided to school alongside (employees who study or employees-students). We found that some students were working in both the formal and informal sectors. Also, there were those working for full time and those working on part time. Students were found to be working in organizations including schools/universities, research institution and self employed which were located both on and off campus. The interesting thing is that majority of them were self employed.

Both categories of students were found to devote lots of time to the work they were engaged in such that a little over 50% worked for 1-15 hours a week and the rest worked for 16-35 hours or more a week. The breakdown of the results revealed that close to 60% of employees-students worked for 16-35 hours or more compared to about 65% of students-workers who worked for 1-15 hours a week. The difference in the time allocation for work may be attributed to the fact that most of the employees-students are employed on full time base than the students-workers who are more likely to be employed on part time base. Another fact established from the study is that the reasons for students to take a job appointment after enrollment may not be the same as the reasons for employees to enroll in a school. Thus students may decide to work for reasons such as, ability to pay school fees, support life on campus, supplement family income, and gain some practical knowledge and due to the influence of parents and friends. Of these reasons, working to support oneself on campus, gaining practical knowledge and supplementing family income topped the list from the study. Similarly, employees have a number of reasons for enrolling in school, of which knowledge acquisition, degree acquisition, both better job and improve social status were the topmost four.

Since D'Amico (1984) and Michael and Tuma (1984) observed that employment among young people in the education system is remarkably high there has been a number of legitimate questions about whether working and schooling at the same time can be a substitute or a complement to education (Buscha et al., 2008). Working becomes a substitute to education when it has negative effect on education especially when it leads to a reduction in time and it becomes a complement when it leads to the acquisition of a variety of skills such as improved work values, literacy and numeracy skills (Holland and Andre, 1987 in Buscha et al., 2008). Available studies like Oettinger (1999) and Montmarquette et al. (2007) show that working while schooling can be a substitute or a complement to education and that is determined by the hours spent on work has negative effect on ones' education (Buscha et al., 2008). However, Watts (2002) found no significance difference between students who work and those who do not work.

In this study, the students-workers interviewed have to battle with class schedule, class choice, time for private studies, assignment, grade point and access to school facilities. These challenges were experienced despite the fact that some of them were able to achieve the objectives for taking a job appointment. The employees-students also, were confronted with the little time for studies, reduction in time for work, and leisure among others. It can thus be inferred that education can also be a substitute to work and leisure for the employees-students. The implication enrolling in school while employed may affect the hours devoted to work and the leisure of the individual. Another point worthy of note here is that challenges like group discussion, difficulty with class choice and schedule confront both categories of students.

Following the findings from the study, it is recommended that, existing support systems should target those whose parents cannot afford to cater for their education. The Student Loan trust should be expanded and made more accessible to students who need it. This may help reduce

the financial burden on students and subsequently the number of hours they work. Secondly, an educational program on financial and time management may help students use their hard earned money and time judiciously and finally, policy makers and other stakeholders must find ways to make students work experiences more supportive of their academic and career goals by establishing paid internship programs and increasing the quota of employees who go on study leave. Workers who want to school alongside their work schedule can take up a course taught on weekend basis to reduce or avoid man hours of work. Employers can also come up with an arrangement with employees who study alongside, so that they can make up for any man hours of work lost due to schooling.

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