

Graduate Tracking Systems and Employment Outcomes in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Article History

Received on 13 January 2026

1st Revision on 22 January 2026

1st Revision on 18 February 2026

Accepted on 20 February 2026

Abstract

Purpose: This paper explores the importance of graduate tracking systems within Nigerian tertiary institutions and examines their implications for enhancing educational quality, institutional accountability, and workforce development. Specifically, it highlights how graduate databases can facilitate tracking of alumni career outcomes and inform institutional adaptation to labor market demands.

Research Methodology: This paper utilizes a review-based research design, analyzing scholarly works, policy documents, institutional reports, and publications concerning graduate tracking systems and employment outcomes. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes, including curriculum development, accreditation processes, and employment trends.

Results: The findings emphasize that effective graduate databases are essential for improving curriculum, supporting accreditation efforts, and fostering alumni engagement. These systems also help institutions assess their contribution to national development and improve students' employability.

Conclusions: This paper concludes that Nigerian institutions face challenges in aligning educational outputs with labor market needs due to the absence of structured graduate databases. Graduate tracking systems are vital for enhancing data-driven decision-making, accountability, and the relevance of education.

Limitations: Include its review-based methodology, which precludes primary data collection or empirical research.

Contributions: This paper contributes to the ongoing discussion on enhancing higher education practices in Nigeria by advocating for the development of robust graduate tracking systems that improve institutional planning, curriculum effectiveness, and graduate employability.

Keywords: *Graduate Database, Tertiary Education, Tracking System*

How to Cite: Ogunode, N. J. (2026). Graduate Tracking Systems and Employment Outcomes in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. *Global Academy of Business Studies*, 2(4), 245-254.

1. Introduction

Higher education plays a fundamental role in national development by producing skilled manpower capable of contributing to economic growth, innovation, and social transformation (Hasibuan, Nasution, & Silalahi, 2024; Mudrikah, Sabandi, & Hakim, 2026). As economies evolve, universities and other tertiary institutions are expected to equip students not only with theoretical knowledge but also to prepare them for successful integration into the labor market (Saputri, Agustina, & Khairunisa, 2025). This preparation involves providing students with practical skills, critical thinking abilities, and the capacity to adapt to dynamic job

environments. Consequently, graduate employability has become a major indicator of educational quality and institutional effectiveness globally. Institutions are now held accountable for producing graduates who are knowledgeable and prepared to meet the demands of various industries (Arizal, Wiyono, Mulyono, & Mayasari, 2025). This focus on employability reflects the growing recognition that higher education encompasses more than academic achievement; it also prepares students to make meaningful contributions to the workforce and society.

In many developed educational systems, tertiary institutions maintain comprehensive graduate databases and conduct tracer studies to monitor the career progression, employment status, and professional achievements of their alumni (Haryono et al., 2025). This valuable data serves multiple purposes, providing institutions with direct feedback on graduate performance in the workforce and identifying areas for program improvement. By tracking graduate outcomes, institutions can ensure their curriculum remains relevant to labor market demands and evolving global competencies. Furthermore, this data supports informed decision-making regarding industry partnerships, policy formulation, and overall educational quality. Consequently, graduate tracking is crucial for institutions seeking to demonstrate accountability, assess program impact, and better prepare students for future career success (Lin-Stephens, Leon, Manuguerra, Barkatsas, & Russell, 2024).

The situation in many Nigerian tertiary institutions differs markedly from those in more developed educational systems. Observations suggest that a significant number of institutions lack structured mechanisms for collecting, updating, and analyzing data on their graduates following program completion (Enihe & Omopariola, 2023; Onwo & Auta, 2025). Once students graduate, institutional engagement often declines, resulting in little to no follow-up on their transition into the workforce, underemployment rates, or career trajectories. This absence of systematic data collection and monitoring creates a significant gap in understanding the effectiveness of educational programs in preparing students for real-world challenges. Without reliable graduate data, institutions are unable to assess the effectiveness of their curricula in equipping graduates with the skills demanded by employers (Andari, Setiawan, & Rifqi, 2021).

Consequently, there is a disconnect between the educational outputs of these institutions and the actual demands of the labor market, hindering efforts to improve employability and align higher education with industry needs (Dlamini & Dlamini, 2026). The inability to track graduate outcomes presents several challenges. First, it restricts universities from conducting evidence-based curriculum reforms aligned with current industry needs. Second, policymakers are deprived of reliable statistics necessary for planning educational investments and employment strategies. Third, accreditation bodies may find it difficult to assess programme relevance without verifiable records of graduate success.

Ultimately, this gap weakens institutional accountability and raises concerns about the return on investment in higher education (Obra, Lai, Usman, Sicat, & Esguerra, 2025). Consequently, there is a growing need to discuss the importance of maintaining a reliable graduate database within Nigerian tertiary institutions and ensuring the preservation of graduate records. This paper seeks to explore graduate tracking practices in Nigerian tertiary institutions and their implications for employment outcomes, with the aim of proposing strategies for improving data management and strengthening the linkage between higher education and the labor market.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Concept of Tertiary Education

Tertiary education follows secondary education and prepares individuals for specific professions or advanced academic degrees. Its primary objectives include providing advanced knowledge and skills within specialized fields, preparing students for their chosen career paths, and fostering intellectual and personal development (Oraison, Konjarski, & Howe, 2019). Tertiary education programs are designed to cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, alongside promoting cultural and social

awareness. Furthermore, tertiary education contributes to economic development by producing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Through a combination of theoretical learning and practical application, it equips individuals with the necessary tools to succeed in their chosen fields and make meaningful contributions to society. Tertiary institutions play an important role within a nation, encompassing the provision of opportunities for social mobility, enabling individuals from diverse backgrounds to access higher education and improve their socio-economic prospects, developing the knowledge and skills required for the modern workforce, and contributing to economic growth through a skilled and educated workforce, innovation, and entrepreneurship (Muliasari, 2023).

According to Ogunode (2025), tertiary education constitutes an organized educational system deliberately designed for manpower production, in-service training, and national development. It advances teaching, research, and community services to facilitate national development. Tertiary education is an education industry that is meant for the production of manpower and national development via implementation of teaching, research and provision of community services. Often referred to as post-secondary education, tertiary education encompasses any level of education pursued beyond secondary school, including undergraduate and graduate credentials (Midan, Isa, Jamaludin, Zaidi, & Zulkifli, 2024). These credentials include certificates, diplomas, or academic degrees.

Typically, tertiary education involves specialized instruction within a specific field, pursued after completing secondary education. It is non-compulsory and is generally provided by specialist institutions, such as colleges, polytechnics, or universities (Obi & Ziprebo, 2024), and may be delivered virtually or at a distance. This form of education may be delivered virtually or at a distance. Tertiary institutions as the educational institutions that provide education beyond the secondary level hence they are also known as post-secondary institutions. These institutions offer a wide range of academic, vocational, and professional programs that lead to certificates, diplomas and degrees (Olofu, Aniekop, & Haruna, 2023). In Nigeria, various tertiary institutions include universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, schools of health, technological institutes, technical institutes, and vocational schools (Udekamna & Nwafor, 2022).

From the above, tertiary education refers to higher education that is pursued after completing secondary education. Tertiary education, pursued after secondary education, encompasses higher education with objectives including providing advanced knowledge and skills, preparing students for specialized careers, and promoting personal, social, and economic development (Chau, Bana, Bouvier, & Frank, 2023). Tertiary education also aims to foster critical thinking, research skills, and lifelong learning habits. It is often considered the final stage of formal education and includes universities, colleges, and vocational schools (Hajmási, Machová, Korcsmáros, & Fehér, 2025). Ultimately, tertiary education plays a crucial role in preparing individuals for the workforce and enabling them to contribute meaningfully to society.

2.2. Concept of Graduate Database and Employment Progress Report

The Graduate Database and Employment Progress Report compiles and organizes data on the job placement, salaries, and career trajectories of recent graduates from a specific university or program. Its objectives are to assist students, faculty, and potential employers in gaining insights into graduate employment outcomes and to identify areas for improvement in career services and curriculum development. Furthermore, the report aims to support graduates in making informed career decisions and to showcase the university's or program's success and impact to external stakeholders. Ultimately, the Graduate Database and Employment Progress Report serves as a valuable tool for evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of a university or program in preparing its students for the job market.

A graduate database is a structured digital repository maintained by an educational institution to store, organize, and manage information about graduates who have completed their academic programmes. It serves as a strategic tool for tracking graduates' career progression, employment status, further education, and professional achievements over time. In modern higher education systems, graduate databases are

increasingly recognized as essential for institutional planning, quality assurance, and accountability (Adzidzah & Yudiawan, 2025). A typical graduate database contains key information, including graduates' personal details, programme of study, year of graduation, contact information, employment status, employer details, job relevance to their field of study, and postgraduate pursuits.

Some institutions also include data on professional certifications, entrepreneurial activities, and geographic mobility. Regular updates to this information provide a comprehensive picture of how effectively an institution prepares students for the labor market (Albarico, 2024). One of the primary functions of a graduate database is to support graduate tracer studies, research efforts aimed at understanding the transition from education to employment. These studies enable institutions to identify skill gaps, evaluate curriculum relevance, and determine whether graduates possess competencies demanded by employers. This feedback mechanism is crucial for continuous academic improvement and helps universities remain competitive in a rapidly evolving global knowledge economy (Ramos, 2024).

The Graduate Database and Employment Progress Report is a tool designed to track the employment progress of graduates. Its main objectives are to provide accurate and up-to-date data on graduate employment status, identify trends and patterns in the job market, and inform education and career services for prospective graduates. Users can access data on employment rates, salary ranges, and industries of employment for graduates of various programs and universities. Furthermore, the report offers insights into the most in-demand skills and qualifications, enabling students and institutions to tailor education and career services to meet employer needs. Ultimately, this tool supports informed decisions regarding education and career paths and enhances students' preparation for successful employment.

2.3. Theoretical Framework: Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, popularized by economists such as Becker and Schultz (1974), suggests that education represents an investment that enhances individuals' knowledge, skills, and competencies, thereby increasing their productivity and economic value. The theory posits that acquiring education and training enables individuals to contribute more effectively to the workforce and national development. Consequently, societies that invest in education are more likely to experience economic growth, technological advancement, and improved living standards. The central argument of Human Capital Theory is that the outcomes of education should be measurable. These outcomes often include employability, income levels, career mobility, and professional competence. As a result, institutions are expected to assess whether their graduates possess the requisite skills for employment and whether educational programs justify the resources invested in them.

Human Capital Theory offers a robust theoretical framework for analyzing graduate databases and employment outcomes within Nigerian tertiary institutions. Given that education is considered an economic investment, institutions require mechanisms to assess the returns on these investments. A graduate database serves as a crucial tool for measuring these returns by providing reliable data on employment status, job relevance, and career progression. The theory emphasizes accountability in educational investment. The theory underscores accountability in educational investment; governments, parents, and students invest significant financial resources in higher education with the expectation that graduates will secure productive employment. Without an effective system for tracking graduates, it becomes challenging to determine whether tertiary institutions are fulfilling this expectation. Consequently, graduate databases function as essential instruments for evaluating the effectiveness of human capital development.

Human Capital Theory emphasizes the importance of aligning education with labor market needs. Institutions can identify skill gaps and adjust curricula to reflect industry demands (Brika, Chergui, Musa, Lamari, & Sharif, 2025). This alignment enhances graduate employability and ensures that competencies acquired during schooling translate into workplace productivity. The theory supports evidence-based educational planning. The theory supports evidence-based educational planning; data generated from

graduate tracking can guide institutional reforms, program development, and policy decisions aimed at strengthening workforce readiness. In the Nigerian context, where graduate unemployment remains a significant concern, such data are essential for understanding whether the challenge stems from inadequate training, labor market saturation, or structural economic factors. Human Capital Theory underscores education's role in national development. A reliable graduate database enables policymakers to forecast manpower needs and design strategies that maximize the economic benefits of higher education. Consequently, the theory reinforces the argument that systematic graduate tracking is not merely administrative but a strategic necessity for socio-economic progress.

3. Methodology

This paper employs a review-based research design, systematically examining and synthesizing existing scholarly works, policy documents, institutional reports, and credible publications related to graduate tracking systems, higher education data management, and employment outcomes. This approach was selected for its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of current graduate database practices within Nigerian tertiary institutions. Given the potential challenges and resource intensity of primary data collection, the review model offers valuable insights derived from a wide range of existing studies. Furthermore, it facilitates the identification of knowledge gaps, emerging trends, and best practices that can inform improvements in graduate tracking systems and employment outcomes in Nigerian higher education.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the sources, the review process utilized several inclusion criteria. Primary materials included peer-reviewed academic journals, books, conference proceedings, and government publications, alongside reports from international educational organizations recognized for their credibility and contributions to the field of education and employment outcomes. Given the rapidly evolving nature of both higher education systems and employment dynamics, particular emphasis was placed on sourcing recent literature from the past five years. This allowed for an up-to-date understanding of graduate tracking systems and their impacts on employability and career development.

The selection process focused on studies addressing key areas including graduate employability, tracer studies, human capital development, institutional accountability, and educational planning. These areas are central to understanding how graduate tracking systems are used to assess the effectiveness of higher education programs in preparing students for the workforce. Furthermore, studies exploring the relationship between graduate databases and national or regional employment policies were prioritized, as they highlight the broader policy implications of graduate tracking practices. The synthesis of these studies enabled a thorough analysis of how graduate tracking systems are utilized within Nigerian tertiary institutions, alongside a comparison with international best practices.

To maintain a clear and consistent focus, the literature selection targeted research addressing both the technological and managerial aspects of graduate tracking systems. This encompassed studies examining infrastructure, data collection methods, and the integration of these systems within broader institutional frameworks. Furthermore, attention was given to the challenges faced by Nigerian institutions in implementing and maintaining such systems, including limited funding, inadequate technology infrastructure, and a lack of standardized practices.

The review incorporated reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations evaluating the impact of graduate tracking systems on the educational and employment landscape. These reports frequently provide data and case studies illustrating the practical outcomes of implementing such systems, including benefits such as improved alumni engagement, enhanced curriculum alignment with labor market needs, and increased institutional accountability. Reports from international educational bodies, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank, were also examined to offer a global perspective on graduate tracking systems and their effectiveness.

This review-based approach is particularly valuable because it synthesizes diverse perspectives and methodologies, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the current state of graduate tracking systems in Nigerian tertiary institutions. By drawing on a wide array of sources, the methodology ensures findings are grounded in a broad, multi-faceted view of the issue, offering valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers seeking to improve graduate tracking systems and employment outcomes within Nigeria's higher education sector.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Importance of Keeping Graduate Data-base and Employment Progress Report in Tertiary Institutions

Maintaining an effective graduate database in Nigerian tertiary institutions is increasingly crucial in the context of a rapidly evolving educational and labor environment. These databases are valuable for tracking alumni career trajectories and serve as essential tools for institutional planning, assessment, and strategic development. Providing data on employment outcomes, they offer insights that can improve curriculum relevance, enhance student employability, and foster stronger ties between institutions and the labor market. Furthermore, they support national development by aligning educational outcomes with economic needs and workforce demands.

4.1.1. Enhances Curriculum Development and Academic Improvement

An effective graduate database provides insights into graduates performance in the labor market. By analyzing employment trends, institutions can assess whether their programs equip students with relevant skills. If a significant proportion of graduates struggle to secure employment in their fields, it may indicate a mismatch between curriculum content and industry expectations. Consequently, universities can revise course structures, incorporate practical components, and integrate emerging competencies such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving skills. This continuous improvement ensures that academic programs remain relevant and competitive. Graduate databases contribute to national educational planning and workforce development. Governments and policymakers rely on accurate data to forecast labor market trends, address unemployment, and design policies that promote economic growth. Without reliable graduate information, it becomes difficult to evaluate the return on investment in higher education or to align educational outputs with national manpower requirements.

4.1.2. Supports Accreditation and Quality Assurance

Regulatory bodies frequently evaluate institutions based on the quality and outcomes of their graduates, making the maintenance of comprehensive graduate databases crucial for institutional success. A well-organized and up-to-date database provides verifiable evidence of graduate employment rates, career progression, and professional achievements—key indicators of the effectiveness of academic programs. Institutions demonstrating positive graduate outcomes are more likely to meet accreditation standards, ensuring continued accreditation and maintaining public trust. Furthermore, reliable data on graduate outcomes not only supports institutional assessment and improvement of academic offerings but also strengthens credibility. By providing transparent and accessible information about graduates' post-graduation success, institutions can foster stronger relationships with stakeholders, including students, alumni, employers, and government agencies. Ultimately, the ability to track and report on graduate outcomes enhances institutional accountability, supporting continuous improvement and better alignment with labor market demands.

4.1.3. Facilitates Strategic Planning and Policy Formulation

Graduate data enable administrators to make informed decisions regarding programme expansion, resource allocation, and institutional priorities. For example, if data reveal high employability in certain disciplines, institutions may invest more in those areas. Conversely, programmes with persistently poor outcomes can be restructured or merged. At the national level, aggregated graduate data can assist policymakers in forecasting workforce needs, addressing skill shortages, and aligning higher education with economic

development goals. A graduate database enhances institutional decision-making. Utilizing a graduate database enhances institutional decision-making; university administrators can rely on accurate data when reviewing programmes, allocating resources, or developing new courses aligned with industry needs. Furthermore, accreditation agencies increasingly require evidence of graduate outcomes as an indicator of programme quality. Consequently, institutions with reliable graduate databases are better positioned to demonstrate effectiveness and maintain academic standards.

4.1.4. Improves Graduate Employability

Maintaining contact with graduates provides institutions with valuable insights into employer requirements and evolving workplace expectations. Access to this information enables institutions to better align their curricula, career services, and student support with the demands of the job market. This knowledge can also guide the development of internship opportunities, industry partnerships, and mentorship programs, thereby improving students' preparedness for employment. Furthermore, a well-maintained graduate database facilitates connections with alumni, allowing institutions to notify them about relevant job openings, professional training, and networking opportunities. These connections support graduates' career advancement and ease the transition from education to employment, benefiting both students and employers. Consequently, institutions can foster stronger alumni relations and contribute to the overall success of their graduates.

4.1.5. Strengthens Alumni Relations and Institutional Development

An effective graduate database serves as a foundation for building strong alumni networks. Regular communication enables institutions to foster a sense of belonging among graduates and encourage their contributions to their alma mater. Alumni frequently support universities through mentorship, collaborative research, infrastructure development, scholarships, and donations. These partnerships enhance institutional capacity and elevate the institution's reputation locally and internationally. Another important benefit is the strengthening of alumni relations. Furthermore, a well-maintained database strengthens alumni relations by facilitating communication between institutions and graduates, thereby enabling the organization of reunions, mentorship programs, professional networking opportunities, and fundraising initiatives. Strong alumni networks often contribute to institutional development by providing scholarships, infrastructure support, and internship placements for current students.

4.1.6. Promotes Accountability and Measures Return on Educational Investment

Higher education necessitates substantial investment from governments, parents, and students, making it crucial to assess whether this investment translates to meaningful employment and societal contributions. Tracking graduates provides valuable insights into the alignment of skills and knowledge gained through higher education with labor market needs. When institutions track graduate outcomes, they can more effectively evaluate their educational mandate and ensure they are preparing students for success. This accountability is particularly important in Nigeria, where concerns regarding graduate unemployment and underemployment persist. Reliable and timely data from graduate tracking systems enable stakeholders—including policymakers, institutions, and employers—to identify existing gaps in education and the labor market. Consequently, they can implement targeted interventions and adapt curricula, career services, and training programs to improve graduate outcomes and enhance employability. Ultimately, graduate tracking contributes to more effective higher education systems and improved economic development.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

The development and maintenance of an effective graduate database in Nigerian tertiary institutions is essential for improving alignment between educational outputs and labor market needs. Increasingly reliant on digital technologies, tracking graduates' career progression and employment outcomes has become a crucial tool for evaluating program effectiveness, guiding curriculum improvements, and enhancing institutional accountability. Graduate databases provide valuable feedback for policymakers, accreditation

bodies, and institutional leaders to ensure that higher education institutions adequately prepare students for the workforce.

However, many Nigerian tertiary institutions lack structured graduate tracking systems, limiting their capacity to assess the impact of their educational programs and engage with alumni. This gap hinders institutions' ability to respond effectively to labor market demands and maintain relevance within a rapidly changing global economy. Therefore, it is recommended that Nigerian tertiary institutions adopt centralized digital platforms for efficient data collection and management, establish policies mandating continuous graduate tracking, and strengthen collaborations with alumni networks. Implementing these measures will enable institutions to better support students' transitions into employment, improve educational outcomes, and contribute to national development.

5.2. Research Limitations

This study employs a review methodology, which, though comprehensive, does not involve primary data collection. This limitation restricts the empirical validation of the proposed findings within specific Nigerian tertiary institutions. Furthermore, the study does not account for variations in infrastructure and technological access across institutions. These disparities may affect the implementation and overall effectiveness of graduate tracking systems, hindering generalization of the findings across the Nigerian higher education landscape.

5.3. Suggestions and Direction for Future Studies

To address the identified gaps, it is suggested that Nigerian tertiary institutions adopt centralized digital platforms for efficient data collection, storage, and analysis of graduate information. These platforms would ensure consistent and accurate updates to graduate data. Furthermore, institutions should establish policies mandating the continuous tracking of graduates to facilitate long-term alumni monitoring. Closer collaborations with alumni bodies are also recommended, as they can provide valuable feedback on educational program success and contribute to maintaining an up-to-date graduate database. Finally, integrating graduate databases with career development centers would enhance job placement services, internship opportunities, and professional networking for graduates, thereby improving their transition into the workforce.

Future studies could benefit from empirical research evaluating the effectiveness of graduate tracking systems within specific Nigerian tertiary institutions. Such studies should focus on institutions in regions with varying levels of technological access to better understand the challenges and successes associated with their implementation. Furthermore, research could explore the impact of graduate tracking on curriculum development and employment outcomes through primary data collection from graduates, employers, and university administrators. An additional important area for future research is examining the relationship between graduate tracking and national labor market needs, utilizing graduate data to inform policy formulation and educational planning. Finally, comparative studies between Nigerian institutions and those in other developing countries could identify best practices for improving graduate tracking systems and adapting them to the Nigerian context.

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