

ACADEMIC DICHOTOMY AND ITS EFFECTS ON WORKERS' PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study looks at the phenomena of academic duality and how it affects employees' performance in modern Nigerian firms. In many disciplines, the distinction between theory and practice—known as the academic dichotomy—has long been a problem. The gap or mismatch between academic knowledge and useful, real-world applications is known as academic dichotomy. The impact of this gap on workers' abilities, job happiness, and general productivity is examined in the paper. The study emphasizes the necessity of closing the gap between academia and practice in order to improve workers' performance by analyzing the body of existing literature and integrating pertinent notions. The academic dichotomy can cause a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical abilities, which lowers job performance and productivity, according to a review of the literature now in publication. The paper concludes that closing this gap through integrated training and curriculum alignment with industry needs can greatly improve worker productivity and performance. It also offers potential remedies to lessen the detrimental effects of academic dichotomy, emphasizing organizational training, continuous learning, and improved alignment between education and industry needs. This study is unique in that it examines how the academic dichotomy between theoretical and practical education affects worker performance within the unique socio-economic and institutional context of Nigeria.

Keywords: *Academic dichotomy, practical application, theoretical knowledge, worker's performance.*

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Introduction

Sociologist Émile Durkheim coined the term "academic dichotomy," which describes the separation of theoretical knowledge from practical abilities (Durkheim, 1893; Berthelsen & Høgh, 2018). This contrast has been seen in a number of domains, such as healthcare, education, and business. The academic divide has been especially noticeable in Nigeria, where many graduates find it difficult to put their theoretical

knowledge to use in real-world situations. The academic dichotomy—the gap between academic learning and working practices—has been a recurring problem in the global workforce. The gap between theoretical education and its practical application has come to be recognized as a barrier to optimal worker performance, given the increasing demand for specialized knowledge and skills in the modern workplace (NIM, 2019). A lack of practical skills, trouble adjusting to quickly

changing work environments, and a discrepancy between what is taught in schools and what companies need can all be consequences of this divide. Employee performance may suffer as a result of the academic duality, according to research. Many Nigerian graduates lack the practical skills necessary to excel in the job, according to a survey conducted by the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM, 2019).

According to another study that was published in the Journal of Education and Human Development, employees may become less productive and satisfied with their jobs as a result of the academic dichotomy (Olaleye, 2020). According to academics, academic dichotomy is the separation between theoretical instruction and the real-world application of information in the profession (Friedman, 2020). Academic institutions place a strong emphasis on theoretical knowledge, but businesses frequently place a higher value on real-world experience and problem-solving skills. Workers, especially fresh graduates, may find themselves ill-prepared for the complexities of their professional tasks as a result of this mismatch. Workers with advanced degrees may not have the specialized skills required for successful job performance in their industries, claim Jones and Johnson (2019). As an attempt to better understand how the interaction between academic credentials and real-world experience affects worker performance, this research thus becomes pertinent.

Although research on educational incompatibilities is expanding worldwide, little is known about the Nigerian setting, with only a few articles appearing in reputable international journals. The academic dichotomy—a chronic and growing divide between theoretical education and real-world workplace demands—threatens to seriously impair Nigerian workforce performance and graduate employability. Many Nigerian graduates lack the practical skills, flexibility, and job preparation necessary to function well

in real-world situations, even when they have a solid theoretical background. Low productivity, job discontent, and a lack of innovation at work are all impacted by this gap. In order to increase workforce performance in Nigeria, governments, educational institutions, and employers may find that filling these research gaps offers insightful information. It also offers a critical analysis of the body of research to identify the root causes and suggests possible approaches to close the gap between academia and practice. The situated learning theory, which holds that learning is most successful when it takes place in a real-world setting, serves as the foundation for our investigation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to this hypothesis, giving students the chance to put their theoretical knowledge to use in real-world situations can help to bridge the academic divide. This study examines how academic duality affects employees' performance, with a particular emphasis on how it affects their efficiency, productivity, and job satisfaction.

Effects of Academic Dichotomy on Workers' Performance

i. Reduced Job Readiness and Adaptability

The most obvious consequence of academic duality is that employees are less prepared to do their jobs effectively. Many employees may find it difficult to put their theoretical knowledge into practice, particularly those who are just starting out in the career. According to Berthelsen and Høgh (2018), engineering graduates may possess a solid theoretical understanding but lack the practical abilities necessary to operate machines or efficiently handle issues that arise in the workplace. This lack of practical expertise may make it more difficult for them to satisfy performance standards and cause delays in output.

ii. Decreased Job Satisfaction

The ability to execute effectively in one's role is closely related to job satisfaction. Employees may become frustrated and

dissatisfied if their academic knowledge and employment responsibilities don't match. Workers may lack confidence and have poorer morale if they are unable to use their knowledge effectively or if they feel unprepared for their tasks (Cohen & Tabrizi, 2020). Stress from this disparity can also lead to higher turnover rates as workers look for more rewarding positions where their abilities better match job requirements.

iii. Lower Productivity

Employee productivity may suffer when they attempt to close the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application. Lower overall productivity might result from the time spent adjusting to workplace responsibilities or looking for extra training, which can cause assignments to be delayed (Zimmerman & Schmidt, 2019). Additionally, employees who lack practical experience could need greater oversight and direction, which puts additional demand on organizational resources and prevents optimal performance.

iv. Decreased Innovation and Creativity

In many businesses, creativity and innovative problem-solving are essential. However, employees may find it challenging to address problems in novel or creative ways if they are limited by the constraints of academic learning. Theoretical knowledge frequently lacks the adaptability required to solve real-world issues, which call for experience learning and adaptable thinking (Kahn & Agrawal, 2022). Therefore, employees who lack the necessary skills to innovate may be less able to contribute to the creation of novel concepts, which could weaken an organization's competitive advantage.

Bridging the Academic-Practice Gap: Proposed Solutions

To solve the negative effects of academic dichotomy, several strategies can be employed by both academic institutions and employers.

i. Curriculum Reform and Industry Collaboration

Working together, academic institutions and industry can effectively overcome the academic dichotomy. Through this collaboration, academic programs can better match the real-world skills required in the business. Project-based learning, co-ops, and internships, for instance, can give students practical experience while they're still working toward their degrees (Fisher & Auster, 2021). By assisting students in acquiring real-world skills, these programs facilitate their transfer from academic to professional environments.

ii. Continuous Professional Development and Lifelong Learning

Employers might also contribute by funding their employees' ongoing professional development. Businesses can assist staff members in bridging the knowledge gap between their academic background and the competencies needed for their positions by providing training courses, workshops, and certification possibilities. Initiatives for lifelong learning can guarantee that workers' knowledge stays current with industry changes (Berthelsen & Høgh, 2018). This strategy encourages flexibility, creativity, and improved work output.

iii. On-the-Job Training and Mentorship Programs

Programs for mentorship and on-the-job training are crucial for mitigating the impacts of academic duality. Organizations can give new hires useful advice and insights by matching less experienced workers with seasoned professionals, giving them invaluable practical experience (Cohen & Tabrizi, 2020). Additionally, by making workers feel more supported and secure in their positions, mentoring can increase job happiness.

Method

This study adhered to recognized guidelines for a systematic literature review procedure in order to guarantee academic rigor. A thorough search was carried out using the following scholarly databases: JSTOR and Google Scholar Peer-reviewed journal papers, reports, and books that address the academic-practice divide and its impact on worker performance that were published between 2010 and 2024 met the inclusion requirements. Opinion pieces, non-English sources, unpublished thesis, and research that have nothing to do with workforce development or Nigeria were excluded. Since the evaluated literature covers the period from January 2010 to December 2024, it includes both classic publications and more contemporary research that reflects changing industry-academic ties. The following standards were applied for assessing each source's academic quality: status of peer review, pertinence to the research inquiry. The final synthesis only includes studies that met three or more criteria. A method of thematic synthesis was used. Inductively derived themes were grouped around academic dichotomy impacts and remedies.

Results and Discussion

According to the literature review, employees' performance may suffer as a result of the academic dichotomy, including decreased productivity and job satisfaction. The review also discovered that by giving students chances to put their theoretical knowledge to use in real-world situations, the divide can be reconciled. A persistent problem that impairs employees' effectiveness is the academic dichotomy. Teachers and trainers must provide students the chance to put their academic knowledge to use in real-world situations in order to overcome this contradiction. Project-based learning, apprenticeships, internships, and other experiential learning techniques can be used to accomplish this. We can give employees the abilities and information they need to be

successful in the workplace by using a more integrated approach to education and training.

Conclusion

In conclusion, workers' performance in a variety of industries is significantly impacted by the academic dichotomy. Innovation, work satisfaction, and productivity can all be hampered by the disconnect between theoretical understanding and real-world application. However, the detrimental effects of academic duality can be lessened by encouraging cooperation between academic institutions and businesses, encouraging lifelong learning, and putting in place efficient on-the-job training. Closing this gap will be essential to ensuring that employees are prepared to give their best work and make a significant contribution to the success of the company as the workplace continues to change.

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