



LINKING THE UNIVERSITY AND INDUSTRY TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF GRADUATES AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY IN TANZANIA

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LINKING THE UNIVERSITY AND INDUSTRY TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF GRADUATES AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

The prosperity of an economy increasingly depends on the availability of a qualified workforce. However, in many of developing countries, there are considerable differences between the graduates' skills and the industry qualifications. Lack of practical skills leaves the graduates with difficulties in finding adequate employment. The study aimed at understanding the link between higher learning institutions and the local industry involvement to meet the labour market. It used a survey method to collect qualitative and quantitative data through a questionnaire survey and a key informant interview. The results indicate the need for practice-related degree programs (73%) that suit the local context and correspond to the current state of science and technology. Skill demand in the labour market (73%), working experience (27%), technical and communication skill (64%) increased challenges among the applicants. This requires practice-oriented degree programmes relevant to the labour market that are cutting-edge and suit the regional and local context. Thus, the need for universities and industry sector collaboration in the form of internships, research, public services and collaborative training and sharing knowledge about institutional funding. The study recommended the development of viable cooperation structures to improve the knowledge transfer between universities and industry for graduates to better suited to the labour market.

1. Introduction

The growing gap between business needs and the structure of disciplines and the quality of training of graduates from respective educational levels is among the challenges faced in labour market (RBEC, 2011). Bleak of the prospects of employment for most of the higher education graduates in Africa increase challenge in attaining the desired development. Such challenges resulted from some reasons, including the negative effects of the overloading of higher learning institutions, rapid technological change, political and economic influence. This is evidence of the increasing shortage of skilled workforce in the context of increasing total unemployment (RBEC, 2011; Branine and Avramenko, 2015).

The rapid expansion of the educational system increased the supply of educated manpower above the corresponding demand that contributes to the unemployment problem. For example, the total number of graduates turned out by the higher education institutions in Tanzania, reached the total enrollment of 82,529 students in all universities (Peter, 2013; Manyaga and Athumani, 2010). Concurrently, with over 40 universities and university colleges in Tanzania and the growing demand for attaining higher

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education augmented the problem of suitable employment for the varieties of graduates turned out by these higher institutions every year. Ordinarily, this should not have been a problem, but the reality is that Tanzania's economy is too weak to absorb this large number of graduates (Peter, 2013).

Orienting students on work etiquette while at college especially, for final year students are prerequisite in linking education with industrial activity and the labour market. In higher learning institutions, an examination orientated teaching which results in student depends on cram work have been the survival for most of the graduates. The discrepancy between knowledge, skills graduates, receive at colleges is a critical problem in a labour market, because most students are struggling passing final exams (Byemelwa, 2013; Branine and Avramenko, 2015). The high learning education is becoming exam factories where students concentrate most of their energies on securing passes at A grade on exams and have given too little attention to skills and the labour market requirements (Amani, 2017). The provision of wellness programs for our graduate project positive effects that suit to the local and regional labour market. The scramble for good academic performance reduced creativity and innovation among students, which are important in acquiring the skills and knowledge required in the labour market (Byemelwa, 2013).

The efficiency and flexibility of operation within the economic cycle increased challenges in the labour markets (RBEC, 2010; Branine and Avramenko, 2015). The negative effects of the massification of higher education, rapid technological change, the crisis in the conception of work in highly developed societies, and the neo-liberal political and economic agenda bleak employment prospects for higher education graduates. This will require some survival strategies for students as well as ways to improve the link between employers and higher education institutions to improve the future employment match (Amani, 2017). This will need flexibility, ability and willing to innovate, entrepreneurial, proactive, and not only be willing to take risks but consider risk and uncertainty as forms of opportunity.

This paper aims to understand the shortcoming of the graduate labour market and the link between higher learning institutions and the involvement of local industry to meet the needs of the local and regional labour market for industry and universities sustainability. Thus the need for higher learning institutions to work with industry to improve the qualities of graduates regarding skills, experience and self-confidence basing on expressed demand/ type of specialization needed.

2. Materials and methods

The study used a survey method that combines the collection of qualitative and quantitative data using questionnaire survey and key informant interview methods through a mixture of tools to ensure the 'triangulation of data and validation of the methods. Questionnaire and guiding checklist and interview guide for key informant was designed and used for data collection among the key industry sectors in Tanzania mainland. It deployed a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques in the selection of institution and respondents. Data collection methods and tools focused on linking the higher institution and industries to improve graduates experience and skills by sharing knowledge about institutional funding and sustainability, and the quality and relevance of graduates. These involved a literature review and survey of secondary and primary data collection. The survey used a questionnaire survey, key informant interviews and in-depth interview to collect information on improving graduates skills and qualification and institution sustainability.

The secondary data was collected from different sources including the internet, survey reports and institutional documents. Also, different documents and literature from previous studies/ research on related topics were reviewed. This involves the collection of information on the link between higher

learning institutions and local industry to meet the needs of the local and regional labour market for their sustainability. Secondary data was used to confirm/crosscheck and complement the primary data. Questionnaire and guiding checklist for a key informant interview guide for target group were designed and used for data collection. A structured questionnaire was used to gather information through an interview with sampled respondents from different domain including government and private institution. Whereas checklist for Key Informants (KI) and In-depth Interview (II) was prepared for data collection. The respondents for the KI and II were purposefully and randomly selected from all level institutions and organization operating in Tanzania. The respondents for KI and II were selected from the people who understand the subject and were chosen merely for their knowledge or unique viewpoint they have in the community.

Data organization, processing and analysis

Since the data were collected by using different methods and tools and from different respondents, their reliability and validity demand a thorough and well-structured triangulation. The range of multi-methods were used to confirm consistency of information and to validate and establish the reliability of the information. Information collected from different data sources (i.e. questionnaire. Key informant interviews and in-depth interview) were processed, compiled and analyzed through content and trend analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel software. These are the well-known computer programme that includes all important methods of data analysis and data manipulation. The analyzed information forms the basis for interpretations and discussions.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Qualification and the graduates' employment opportunities

3.1.1 Challenges for graduate in the labour markets

Lack of job experience is among the challenge in getting employment for most of the graduate after completing their studies without work experience. This forced most of graduates to work in the field that are not specialized with less competent and have no working experience. The results indicated that most graduates face a lot of challenges in the labour market that include incompetent / ineffectual graduates, inadequate experience and skilled labour and lack of adequate labour reform especially in less developed countries like Tanzania. Other challenges are lack of participation of industry to groom the graduates, not adhere to the working culture for most of employed graduates, Lack of confidence/ poor communication skills, expectations of higher salary jobs for most graduates, increased competition for limited jobs and politics in education that affects the quality and skills offered. Figure 1 indicates the challenges experienced in the labour market.

Most of the employers need experience of more than two years as a requirement for employment, this is seen as an obstacle for graduates (Ntallima, 2014). Most of the firms are reluctant to hire fresh graduates as they lack working experience and required skilled. Graduate often caught in the experience trap, where they have no work experience simply because they have been unable to get a proper practice in the first place (Aman, 2017). In addition to experience, the mismatch between educational systems and the skills needed in the labour market augmented the problem. Moreover, self-employment while no initial capital and not groomed for it, even those who insist on self-employment are within employment. These challenges call for a comprehensive package for graduates which include all stakeholders and required skilled and practical experience. The knowledge of labour markets and required skills and experience remained an important component in the employment arena.

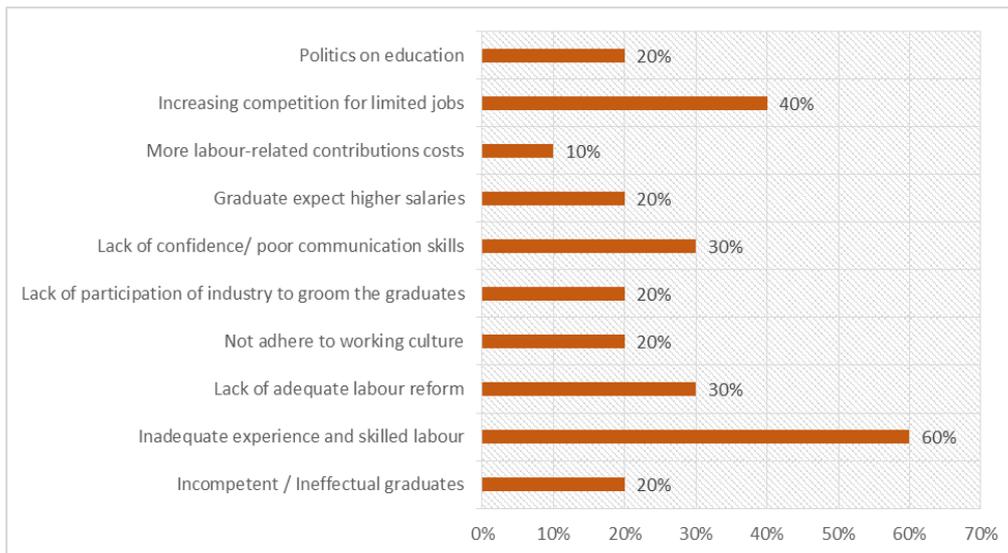


Figure 1: The challenges faced in the labour market

3.1.2 Weakness of the current skills of university graduates

The current education in most of the higher learning institutions is more theory-oriented with less or no practical. The results from KI revealed that poor performance, lack of skills and incompetent in a labour market contributed by lack of practical training, poor attendance in class services and poor reading skills that associated with cheating behavior while taking tests and examination. In reducing the cheating behavior and increase performance the respondents suggested that, teachers/ lecturers/ tutors should not be hired based on their GPAs, some GPAs are fake and therefore fake teachers. The assessment of teachers/ lecturers should be based on a number of criteria, including long-term assessment of skills, performance, ability, working culture and practical experience. Thus, there is a need to seriously bring back the respect that the education sector has in neighboring countries and in developed countries. However, this need not to copy and paste everything, as we differ in terms of culture, economic and environment. Figure 2 below indicates the weakness of the current education system.

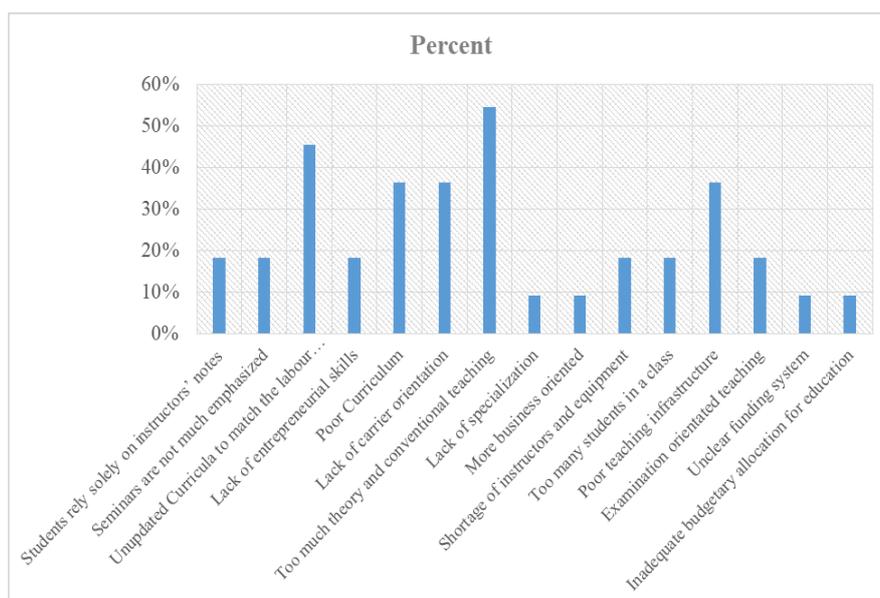


Figure 2: The weakness of the current education at the higher learning institution

Basing on the questionnaire results current education characterized by a number of shortcomings. These include reliance of most of the student solely on instructors' notes (which are always summaries), seminars are not much emphasized to students and curricula are not updated to match the current needs of the market. Such characteristics render most of the graduate unfit to the labour market. According to Amani (2017) the barriers to employment include the choice of field of study, job–skills mismatch, lack of confidence and poor communication skills, ineffective career guidance and ineffective labour market information system. Another weakness of the current education system include lack of entrepreneurial skills, poor curriculum, lack of carrier orientation, too much theory and conventional teaching, lack of specialization (more subject with unnecessary subjects). In addition, higher learning institution is more business oriented not skilled and knowledge, shortage of instructors and equipment, too many students in a class, poor teaching infrastructure, examination orientated teaching, unclear funding system and inadequate budgetary allocation for education. Figure 3 below described the weakness of the current higher learning education.

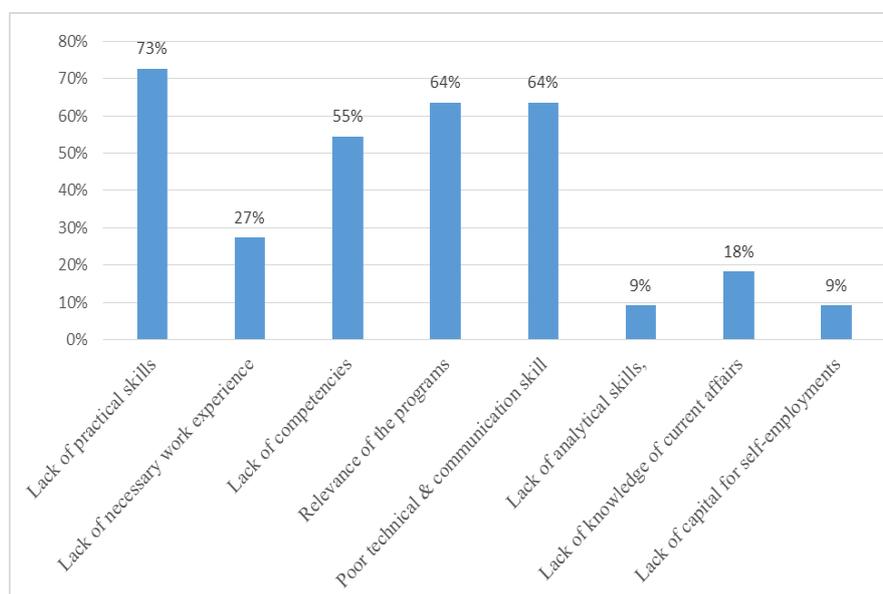


Figure 3: Reason for difficulties in finding employment opportunities among the graduates

Figure 3 shows that a lack of practical skills (73%) is among the main challenge for most of graduate to compete in the labour market. This was followed by the relevance of the programs and poor technical and communication skill that form important requirement in a labour market. Such challenges call for the need to engage higher learning students in different places for practices so as to get experience according to their specializations. Other reasons for accessing employment among the graduates include lack of necessary work experience, lack of competencies, lack of analytical skills, lack of broad-based knowledge of current affairs and lack of capital for self-employments. Among graduates a positive relationship between levels of competence in skills and degree of self-esteem are a prerequisite in the labour market. This calls for higher learning institutions put more effort in practical than in theory in their teaching process so as to get more knowledge and experience which are useful in a labour market.

3.2 The qualification, knowledge and skills relevant to the labour market

The availability of highly qualified labour force is crucial for the prosperity of an economy of a nation. The value of education and knowledge and skills provided, determine the type of economic, and development, prosperity at a local level and completion of a global labour market. Tanzania as other

Sub-Saharan Africa countries have less capacity to absorb the new entering in the labour market yearly. The discrepancy between the skills of university graduates and qualifications needed by the industry increased challenges in the labour market in many of these countries. Thus, diversify skilled is required for absorbing a number of new labour force entering into the labour market. This need to include the entrepreneur skills for self-employment, and orienting on etiquette and self-assurance on working places. Figure 4 below indicates the qualification, knowledge and skills required in the local and regional/ global labour market.

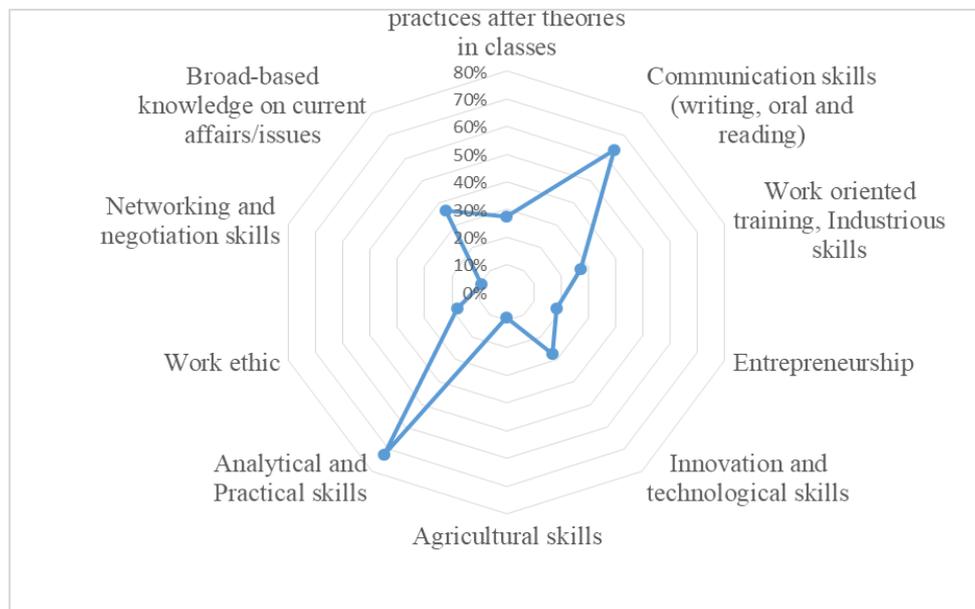


Figure 4: Qualities and skills required for graduates that are relevant and suit the labour market

The results indicate that analytical and practical skills followed by communication skills (writing, oral and reading) are the most important requirement in the labour market. Concomitantly, the broad-based knowledge on current affairs/issues are important in understanding the technological development and innovations. Other requirements include accentuation of more practices after theories in classes, provision of work-oriented training, acquire ring industrious skills through on training, internship and field practical. Furthermore, a consented skill needed for entrepreneurship, innovation and technology, agriculture, work ethic, networking and negotiation. Thus, a need to review university training curricula so as to incorporate the key generic skills like entrepreneurship.

3.3 The industries Participation in taming quality of graduates

The graduates from higher learning institution need to be equipped with basic knowledge and skills that meet the local and regional labour market. Understanding the types of knowledge and skilled demand on the labour market is important for improving graduate knowledge and skills. The focus is on reducing challenges among the applicants that include lack of necessary work experience, technical and communication skill. This will require industries to work with higher learning institutions to express their demand/type of specialization and enlisted students in the working environment prior to graduation for practices. Universities can bring in experts from industries to give part-time lectures/ professional talks on specific field so as to increase skills and knowledge in the dynamic labour market. Table 1 indicates the involvement of the industry in terming the graduates in higher learning institutions.

Table 1: Involvement of industries in grooming graduates to meet the challenges of the labour market

Involvement the local industries	N	Percent	Cases (%)
Work together with higher learning institutions to express their demand	8	13.8	40.0
Provision of internship for the students	10	17.2	50.0
Assist with skills that much better for the local and regional market	10	17.2	50.0
Invest more in human capital	4	6.9	20.0
Participation in various student events	2	3.4	10.0
Motivation of best students with competitive scholarship	2	3.4	10.0
Inputs on curriculums	4	6.9	20.0
Support apprenticeship in offices for graduates	6	10.3	30.0
On-job training for college leavers or those with internship	8	13.8	40.0
Link education with industrial activities	4	6.9	20.0
Total	58	100.0	290.0

The result indicates the importance of the industrial sector in grooming the graduate through on training program, involvement in stipulating the graduate's needs, field practices and internship. Assist with skills that much better to the local and regional market and provision of internship were suggested to improve the skills and quality of graduates to well equip in the labour market. The industry sector can also contribute/ collaborate with high learning institutions through participation in various student events and motivating the best students with competitive scholarship within their firms, provision of inputs on curriculums, support apprenticeship in offices for graduates and on-job training for college leavers or those with an internship. The results revealed the need to link education with industrial activities so as to improve ability, quality and absolve labour demands. Thus the need to invest more in human capital to sustain the development and is a wealth of the current and future generation.

3.4 The higher learning institution and industry sector collaboration

The results indicated the importance of linking the industries and higher learning institution in the form of internships, research link, provision of public services and collaborative training, sharing knowledge about institutional funding and sustainability. Such collaboration said to increase productivity in both industry and academic arena. Figure 5 below describes the area for collaboration between universities and industry sectors.

Research, training and sharing knowledge about institutional funding and sustainability is among the most suggested areas for collaboration between higher learning institution and industry. Other suggested collaboration is in the form of internships, provision of public services, on training, though bringing in the experts from industries on a specific field. Industries can take on the role of on-job training for fresh graduates or those with internship whereas the universities can bring in experts from industries to give part-time lectures/ professional talks on a specific field.

A collaboration between universities and industries will provide a match between the knowledge and skills of graduates and the needs of employers in the labour market. These will help to understand the process of graduate recruitment, employee and employer expectations, and the role of higher education institutions in meeting such expectations. It will fill the current differences in higher education systems, miss match and labour market trends, the expectations of employers and graduating students in an integrated labour market.

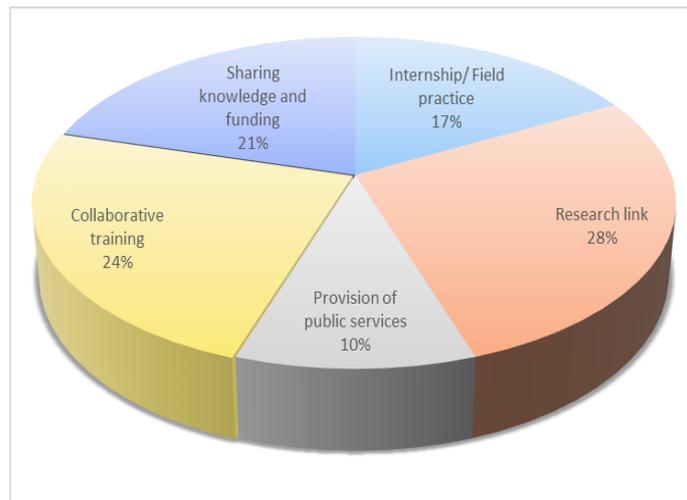


Figure 5: Area for collaboration between universities and industry sectors

Opinion for improving the skills required for graduates from higher learning institutions include the provision of more practical lessons than theory (50%), knowledge of the market demand prior specialization (40%), prior experience of the carrier (30%), need for curriculum (s) evaluation and review to meet current needs (30%) and combine theory and practice in subtle ways (30%). Other suggestions for improvement are emphasized informal education (20%), entrepreneurship knowledge (20%), provision of confidence exercise/ practices to students (20%), commitment and hardworking (10%) and exchange programs to share experiences (10%). Preeminently, education is vital to appropriate success in life and sustainable development and resources management. For instance, under current industrialization initiatives in most of the African country, education is the stamping pillar and foundation of amplifying industrialization toward a middle income economics.

5. Conclusions

Graduates of higher learning institutions need to engage in different places for practices to get experience according to their specializations. There is a need for higher learning institutions to put more effort in practical than in theory in their teaching process so as get more knowledge and experience which will be useful in labour market.

Encouragement of entrepreneurship and self-employment skills especially, in less developed countries with a weak private sector and minimal capacity of the government in terms of creating employment. Provision of potential entrepreneurship and self-employment skills with vital labour market and finance (credit) information viewed as alternative ways of improving graduate skills and employment creation. The university/ college graduate skills and qualifications needed by the industry substantially differ in the labour market. This required, therefore, graduates to have the requisite skill-sets and competencies required in the industry.

A concerted effort from all the major actors is absolutely vital in improving the higher learning graduates' skills. The higher learning institution should be at the forefront in improving the quality education and provision of skills required in a labour market. The industry sector should be there to complement any such effort through consultation and internship, while the government should belligerently create a conducive environment and coordinate.

The study revealed the need for universities and industry sectors for establishing strong collaboration in the form of internships, research link, provision of public services and collaborative training, sharing knowledge in relation to institutional funding and sustainability, and quality and relevance of graduates.

The study further recommended the development of to mproving graduate skills to better suit the local and international labour market through viable cooperation structures and knowledge transfer between higher learning institution and industry.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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