

Business Education Students' Evaluation of the Benefits and Challenges Confronting Student Industrial Works Experience Scheme in Edo and Delta States

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Abstract

This research paper specifically investigated Business Education students' evaluation of the benefits and challenges confronting Student Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Edo and Delta States. Two research questions were raised to guide the study and were answered descriptively. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 941 Business Education students and the proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting a sample size of 188 Business Education students for the study. The instrument used was the structured questionnaire and it was validated by experts in the field. The test re-test method of reliability was used in ascertaining the reliability of the instrument and it yielded a co-efficient of 0.87. The mean and standard deviation were used in analyzing the data collated and some of the findings include: SIWES has great benefit especially in equipping Business education students with skills and that funding is a major challenge confronting SIWES. One of the major recommendations advanced in this paper was that there should be more funding of the scheme by the government in order for it to be more effective.

Keywords: Business Education, SIWES and evaluation

Introduction

Business education is one of the vocational courses taught in academic institutions in Nigeria. According to Imeokparia and Ediagbonya (2014), Business education is described as an aspect of education that is geared at equipping the learners (students) with business and education competencies (that is, skills, knowledge and attitude) needed to effectively and efficiently function in the world of work either as an employee or an employer (job/wealth creator). The authors further stressed that Business education is an 'umbrella word' which covers both secretarial education (that is now known as Office Technology and Management) and Accounting Education. Office Technology and Management (OTM) emphasizes the teaching of office and management related skills while Accounting Education primarily emphasizes the teaching of accounting related skills.

In a similar vein, Osuala (2004) opined that Business education is divided into two parts: office education, which is vocational in nature for office careers and general business education which is a programme that provides information and competences needed for managing businesses. The primary objective of business education is to foster the acquisition of the necessary business competencies needed to effectively function in the world of work, either as an employee or an employer of labour. The need for ensuring that the theoretical knowledge acquired by students is matched with their practical knowledge gave room to the establishment of Student Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES).

SIWES is one of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) programme which was introduced in 1974 due to the inability of engineering and technology students in Nigeria universities and polytechnics to meet the practical aspects of their training. That is, the needs to enable students match their theoretical school knowledge with the practical aspect of their training in industry. According to Ekpenyong (2011), one of the principles underlying any industrial work experience scheme for students in institutions of learning is the desire to marry the practical with the theoretical learning which characterizes conventional classroom situations with a view to striking a balance between theory and practice. The author stressed further that it was in realization of this that the ITF when it was established, set out to study the extent to which the theoretical knowledge that students in engineering technology and other allied fields in Nigerian institutions offering technology based courses related to the kind of work experience expected of them by employers.

The result of the ITF survey showed a great disparity between students' knowledge and their ability to apply it in relevant jobs. In order to bridge the gap between the two, the ITF in 1974 established a co-operative internship programme, which enabled students of technology to spend some part of their courses for relevant on-the-job practical experiences in appropriate areas of the Nigerian industry (Ekpenyong, 2011). The author further stressed that the internship programme, SIWES, can therefore be seen as that which is intended to give Nigerian students studying occupationally related courses experience that would supplement their theoretical learning as a well of equipping the students with the needed skills to function in the world of work.

According to Ihebereme (2010), skill acquisition is the process of acquiring or gaining effective and

ready knowledge in developing ones aptitude and ability in a particular field. It is also described as ability to show competence in what one is doing as a result of the theoretical and practical knowledge gained through training (Nwonyeh, 2010). Ihebereme (2010) stressed that skill acquisition is one among other policies embarked upon in Nigeria with the sole aim to alleviate poverty, youth restiveness, sophisticated crime and corruption rate, rural-urban drift, unemployment and other social vices. Skill acquisition in Nigeria education is meant to equip our students with more practical and less theoretical knowledge that will make the students to be more useful in the world of work. The need to acquiring skills has further strengthened SIWES and research works in the area.

Several research works have been carried out with a view to understanding the contributions of SIWES and the possible challenges confronting the scheme. The study carried out by Ekwue and Eluro (2002) on Business Education for the Industry highlighted that SIWES helped to improve the skill acquisition requirement of Nigeria Certificate in Education Business Education Students. Furthermore, it showed that SIWES is poorly managed and undermines the achievement of desired set objectives of the programme. The study by Uramah (2003) revealed that proper implementation of SIWES programme encourages good academic performance and enhances better productivity by students in the labour market. Awojobi (2002) in a study entitled College – industry linkage and the training of Business Education Students, some of the findings from the study include: (i) The College-based supervisors were indicted by 51% of the respondents as not having visited them for the required number of times as stipulated in the scheme. (ii) Many students for the SIWES programme could not find relevant placement that would enhance their course of study. (iii) A significant number of students claimed that the SIWES programme was not relevant to their studies as they considered it to be a waste of time and resources. Wodi and Dokubu (2009) in a similar study equally concluded that there were also lack of adequate supervision by the school, difficulties of students in getting placement and undue delay in paying students' and supervisors' allowances.

Statement of the Problem

As indicated in the background of this study, SIWES was established in the year 1974 by Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to meet a felt need for individual efficiency by those who left school to work; precisely that of ensuring that engineering technology and management students who graduate from the universities and allied tertiary courses in technical and business education in colleges of education have not only theoretical but also practical competencies in the areas of their studies.

Since business and technical education are industry related, the students of these courses are equally enlisted on the scheme. Over the years, there has been no clear evidence of benefits of SIWES, particularly as it relates to business education students enlisted on the scheme. Since there are diverse and unsubstantiated views of the benefits of the scheme particularly in Edo and Delta States; the researcher became interested in finding out from Edo and Delta business education students who have taken part in the scheme, how they would evaluate the scheme in the two states. Are business education students really benefiting from the programme? What are the problems confronting the effectiveness of the scheme. It is on the basis of this that the researcher intends to evaluate the benefits and challenges confronting SIWES.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of SIWES as seen by business education students that have taken part in the scheme in meeting the objectives for which it was established. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Determine the benefits business education students derive from SIWES;
- ii. Determine the perceived challenges confronting the effectiveness of SIWES;

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the research work, the following research questions have been raised to guide the study:

- i. To what extent do business education students benefit from SIWES?
- ii. What are the perceived challenges confronting the effectiveness of SIWES;

Scope of the Study

This study is on the Business Education Students' Evaluation of the benefits and challenges confronting Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme in Edo and Delta States. The study covered the five Colleges of Education in Edo and Delta States and they include: College of Education, Ekiadolor, College of Education, Igueben, College of Education, Agbor, College of Education, Warri, and College of Education, Asaba. Some of the variables useful in the study includes: students and business education.

METHODOLOGY

This section dealt with the methods the researcher utilized in carrying out the study. This section was organized under the following sub-headings:

Design of the Study

This study utilized survey design since the researcher was interested in assessing Business Education students'

evaluation of the benefits and challenges confronting SIWES in Edo and Delta States. This is in agreement with Nworgu as cited in Omoroguiwa (2006) that a research survey is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collection and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire population.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all year two Business Education students in Colleges of Education in Edo and Delta States that have participated in the SIWES exercise. The total population is nine hundred and forty one (941) students.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study was 188 students representing 20% of the population. The proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used in drawing up the sample from the entire population and which was considered to be representative of the whole population.

Instrumentation

The instrument used was the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was used in drawing data from the respondent and it was titled: **Business Education Students' Evaluation Questionnaire (BESEQ)**. BESEQ was divided into two parts – A and B. Part A consists of the demographic variables of the respondents (students) while part B consists of two (2) sections with fifteen (15) opinion statements designed in a 4-Point Rating Scale showing Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The breakdown shows that research question 1 has items 1 – 8; research question 2 has items 9 – 15.

Validity of the instrument

The instrument was subjected to content and face validity. It was given to the project supervisor and two other experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Business Education in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin (UNIBEN) and their inputs to the draft instrument were incorporated into the final questionnaire.

Reliability of the Instrument

A test – retest method was used in establishing the reliability of the questionnaire. The instrument was administered to twenty (20) respondents in the population who were not part of the sample. It was re-administered after two weeks on the same subject/respondents. The two scores were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation co-efficient (r) formula to determine the reliability of the instrument and a coefficient of 0.78 was obtained.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher utilized the face to face method of data collection. The researcher engaged the services of two (2) research assistants who were exposed to a short training on how to go about the data collection in the institutions for the study; the questionnaire was thereafter collated by the researcher within a space of four (4) weeks.

Method of Data Analysis

The descriptive statistical tools were used in analyzing the data collated. The descriptive statistics used include mean and standard deviation and they were used in answering all the research questions. Any mean value of 2.50 and above was considered as accepted while below 2.50 was considered as rejected.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the presentation and analysis of data collected and the discussion of findings. The results of the analysis were presented according to the order of the research questions that guided the study and it was presented under the following:

- Answering of Research Questions
- Discussion of Findings

Answers to the Research Questions

The Data collected to answer the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and the results are shown below.

Answering of Research Questions

This section is concerned with the analysis and presentation of the data regarding the two questions. The descriptive statistics used here are presented in tables and they include mean and standard deviation; and the mean value of 2.50 was used in taking decision.

Research Question 1: To what extent do business education students benefit from SIWES?

Questionnaire items 1 – 8 were designed to address the research question. The summary of responses is as given in table 1.

Table 1: Examination of the Skills Acquired by Students/Benefits

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	SIWES exercise has exposed me to proper communication skills.	3.24	.989	Agree
2	SIWES exercise enables students to acquire the necessary skills needed in office management.	1.97	.807	Disagree
3	SIWES exercise promotes the mastery of risk management skills.	3.44	.797	Agree
4	Interpersonal skills are properly instilled in students during SIWES.	3.07	1.057	Agree
5	SIWES exposed students to the skills of properly managing materials and facilities.	3.40	.706	“
6	SIWES has exposed me to proper time management skills.	3.16	.869	“
7	SIWES promotes proper acquisition of personal quality skills.	3.66	.647	“
8	The experience of SIWES exposes student to the intricacies in office automations.	3.31	.914	“
	Aggregate	3.15	0.848	Agreed

Source: Author's field work (2015)

Table 1 shows that most of the mean scores are above 2.50 which is the mean score for decision making. The highest mean score of 3.66 was recorded in item 18 while the lowest mean score was recorded in item 13. The aggregate mean and standard deviation are 3.51 and 0.848 respectively. Since the aggregate mean score is 3.51 and it is above the mean value of 2.50, all the items are therefore accepted which means that SIWES promotes the acquisition of skills by students.

Research Question 2: What are the perceived challenges confronting the effectiveness of SIWES?

Questionnaire items 9 – 15 were designed to address the research question. The summary of responses is as given in table 2.

Table 2: Examination of the Factors Militating against the Effectiveness of SIWES

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
9	The unwillingness of employers of labour to absorb students for SIWES training affects the effectiveness of the scheme.	3.66	.695	Agree
10	The poor funding of the scheme has great negative impact on the effectiveness of the programme.	3.37	.833	“
11	The attitude of employers of labour towards rewarding the trainees (students) with little stipends is militating against the effectiveness of the scheme.	3.46	.741	“
12	The poor collaborative effort or liaison between business organizations and institutions of learning is affecting the effectiveness of the scheme.	3.02	1.084	“
13	The inadequacy of modern office automations in some of these business organizations affect the effectiveness of this scheme as students are not properly equipped with the desired skills due to inadequate modern sophisticated office equipments.	3.50	.784	“
14	The unwillingness of business organizations to assist researchers with adequate data to aid research work greatly affects the effectiveness of the scheme.	2.89	.919	“
15	The wrong placement of students for SIWES programme in organizations also affects the effectiveness of the scheme as these students will not be able to acquire the desired skills.	3.00	.970	“
	Aggregate	3.27	0.861	Agreed

Source: Author's field work (2015)

Table 2 shows that all the mean scores are above 2.50 which is the mean score for decision making. The highest mean score of 3.66 was recorded in item 20 while the lowest mean score was recorded in item 25. The aggregate mean and standard deviation are 3.27 and 0.861 respectively. Since the aggregate mean score is 3.27 and it is above the mean value of 2.50, all the items are therefore accepted which means that the above factors

militate against the effectiveness of SIWES.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the research questions raised in the study have revealed some interesting findings that are worth considering and discussing based on some relevant literature to either corroborate or contradict the findings. They are discussed sequentially and systematically in the following paragraphs.

The findings from the analysis of research question one (1) reveals that business education students benefit from SIWES. This finding corroborates the findings of Ibrahim (2011) where the author stressed that there is a significant relationship between SIWES and business education programme in colleges of education in Nigeria. Uramah (2003) supports these findings where the author stressed that SIWES helped to improve the skill acquisition requirement of Nigeria Certificate in Education business education students. Imeokparia and Ediagbonya (2012); and Ediagbonya and Oyadongha (2013) also support this finding in the studies on employability and they stressed that business education students stand a chance of benefitting greatly from SIWES especially in the area of skill acquisition. The study conducted by Isah (2003) corroborates this finding where the author stressed that SIWES prepares business education students to fit-in readily for employment in industries and commerce. The study also stressed that SIWES offers an opportunity for business education students to interact with workers of various cadres in industries. Mohammed (2001) also affirmed the findings of this study where the author stressed that SIWES helps students to gain knowledge and attitudes necessary for successful job placement, acquire good work habits, learn how to get along with fellow workers and employers and develop personality and pose which will influence his/her academic performance positively and his/her relationship with colleagues.

The findings from the analysis of research question two (2) reveals the factors militating against the effectiveness of SIWES. The respondents agreed that all these factors militate against the effectiveness of SIWES. This finding has been supported by many scholars in the field. The findings which revealed the unwillingness of employers' of labour to absorb students for SIWES training was also supported by the findings of Ekwue and Eluro (2002) where the authors stressed that many Nigeria banks do not consider students of business education for SIWES programme in their establishments. The study also revealed that the wrong placement of students for SIWES militates against the programme. This findings was also supported by Awojobi (2002) where the author stressed that many students for the SIWES programme could not find relevant placement that would enhance their course of study.

Conclusion

This article has been able to x-ray the issues concerning SIWES which is a core scheme in ITF and which is saddled with the responsibility of strengthening the effective teaching and learning of skill based course such as Business Education. Based on the data collated and the subsequent analyses, this paper therefore concludes that SIWES is of great benefit to students of Business Education in tertiary institutions in Edo and Delta States. It therefore implies that the proper and effective administration of SIWES will go a long way in boosting and enhancing the competencies of the workforce. It was also concluded that SIWES is confronted with series of challenges and this may have hindered the realization of the goals and objectives of the scheme and it therefore needs to be given attention by all concerned stakeholders.

Recommendations

This empirical investigation has revealed outstanding findings and based on that, the following recommendations are therefore advanced:

- i.* Students' Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES) needs to be strengthened by all concerned stakeholder in order for its objectives to be realized;
- ii.* Organizations should always provide the necessary logistics needed for the smooth running of the SIWES;
- iii.* Regular monthly allowances for students on attachment should be paid promptly;
- iv.* Organizations should always accept students for SIWES and subsequently assign them to relevant jobs;
- v.* Experience staff should always be made to train the students on attachment;
- vi.* Business education students learning progress should be closely monitored and supervised by experienced staff;
- vii.* Employers of labour should be more willing to absorb business education students for SIWES;
- viii.* There should be more funding of the scheme by the government in order for it to be more effective;
- ix.* There should be more collaborative efforts or liaison between business organizations and institutions of learning; and
- x.* Business organizations should strive to provide more up-to-date office automations in the training of business education students on SIWES.

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