

Home Economics Students' Assessments of their Benefits from Students' Industrial Work Scheme Experience: A Case Study of Two Tertiary Institutions in Abia State

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Abstract

The study assessed the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) experience of Home Economics students in tertiary institutions in Abia State. Three research questions guided the study. The population of the study consisted of 42 respondents of 400 level students. Questionnaire was used to collect data. Data were analyzed using frequencies and mean. The findings include, that SIWES enhances entrepreneurial experiences of students, their practical skills and acquisition of more skills, among others. It is recommended that SIWES programme be made a yearly programme to enable students acquire more skills.

Keywords: Home, Economics, Industrial, Work, Experience.

Introduction

Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), is a programme designed to enable students acquire practical experience in the industry. SIWES is part of approved undergraduate degree skill oriented programmes in Nigerian tertiary education which was established after the inception of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1971. The SIWES programme began in 1973 to solve the problem of lack of adequate practical skills of Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions and prepare them for employment in industries. It was a planned and structured scheme with specific career objectives geared

towards developing participants' occupational competences.

Nse (2012), opined that SIWES affords students the opportunity of familiarizing and exposing themselves to the needed experience in handling equipment and machinery that are usually not available in their institutions.

The period of SIWES is supposed to be a time of serious skill acquisition, learning and experience on the job. According to Ugwuanyi (2009), SIWES should be a period of development for students. Unfortunately, however, to some uninformed students, it is a time for jamboree and truancy (Madu, 2014). This negatively affects achievement of the objectives of the

scheme. The objectives of SIWES according to ITF (2003), are to:

- i. Prepare students for post-graduate work situation.
- ii. Prepare an avenue for students in institutions of higher learning to acquire industrial skills and experience in their course of study.
- iii. Make the transition from university/tertiary institutions to the world of work easier and thus, enhance student's contacts for latter job placements.
- iv. Enhance placement and strengthen employers involvement in the entire educational process of preparing universities/tertiary institutions graduates for employment in industries.
- v. Provide students with an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in real work situation, thereby bridging the gap between university work and actual practices; and
- vi. Expose students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in the universities or tertiary institutions.

SIWES is therefore very important to students in the following ways, as it:

- ❖ provides students with an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in real life situations.
- ❖ exposes students to more practical methods and techniques.
- ❖ strengthens the link between employers, universities and industrial training fund (ITF).

❖ also prepares the students for labour market after graduation which is the aim of Industrial Training Fund (ITF): to provide avenue for students in the institution of higher learning to acquire practical skills that they are likely to meet after graduation.

Since the inception of SIWES in 1974, it has groomed millions of Nigerian youths towards self-reliance and competency. This has been of great value and importance in the building of nation. The provision of students with the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge to real life situation, its ability to expose students to more practical work methods and techniques, the strengthening of the link between students, government, tertiary institutions and the labour markets constitute the benefits and importance of SIWES programmes to the nation.

No society can achieve meaningful progress without its youth acquiring the necessary practical skills. Such skills enable them to harness available resources to meet the needs of the society. It was against this background that SIWES, otherwise referred to as Industrial Training (IT) was introduced in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions (Ugwuanyi & Ezema, 2012).

Assessment is the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. It is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting and using information to

increase students' learning and development. On the other hand, it is defined as the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding on what students know, understand and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent outcome. Assessment can also be said to be a process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge skills and benefits. Experiences acquired by individual can also be assessed and different perceptions and conclusions can be reached through a proper assessment. It is the process of obtaining and providing information making subsequent judgment about appropriateness and reliance of an action based on the given criterion (Obi, 2010).

Home Economics is a discipline with several specialized fields addressing the problems of household welfare, and is becoming increasingly inter-disciplinary in nature but UKO-AVIOMOH (2005) in Obunadike and Nwokoli (2010) described Home Economics as a skill-oriented field of study that is expected to equip learners with skill that make for self-reliance/self-employment. This is in line with Ozougwu (2008) who opined that the major objective of Home economics is the production of man power that possess the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude about food, clothing/textiles and home

resources and bringing them into cooperative relationships. Molokwu (2001) notes that Home economics is a skilled-oriented field of study that is noted for its capability of equipping learners with skills that can rightly make the individual to be self-employed, an employer of labour and also fit into the labour sector.

Ezeali and Eziagu (2009) notes that Home Economics acquisition of skills or training is an organized, coordinated development of knowledge, skills and attitude needed by an industrial worker to master a given situation or perform a certain task within an organizational setting. This is in line with the objective of SIWES programme. Ukwuoma and Akanwa (2008) citing Robinson (1998) observe that effective training brings about an increase in knowledge required in the job, knowledge of the structure and business arms of the organization. SIWES programme improves skills towards actualizing full potential that is required in post-graduates life of students, participate in work activities while attending school Oyedele (1990) states that from all indications experience and skill is the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience that is needed. Experience can be obtained through education, training or programmes (SIWES) that will inculcate into the individual how to carry out or discharge effective responsibility very well with the new knowledge. This is because any work carried out by skilled people cannot be compared with those tasks performed

by the unskilled people. Experiences gained by Home Economics students during their SIWES programme have helped them in meeting their everyday ends and needs during post-graduate periods. According to Ene-Obong (2006) graduates of Home economics at the tertiary levels need to be industrious, creative and enterprising to be able to meet the challenges of daily living.

The increasing rate of unemployment and poverty in the lives of graduates and the unemployability of the Nigerian graduates due to their lack of basic skills and experience in their field of study despite involving in programmes and trainings, including the students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) has left numerous unanswered questions in our society. The above problems have prompted the researcher to investigate the assessment of SIWES experiences of Home economics students in Tertiary institutions in Abia State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to assess SIWES experience of Home Economics student's in two tertiary institutions in Abia State. Specifically, the study determined the students' perception of:

1. areas where SIWES enhanced their skills
2. various abilities (Skills) they gained from SIWES
3. ways their SIWES experiences have been effective.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study tend to seek;

1. What are the areas SIWES enhance Home Economics students 'skills?
2. What are the various abilities (skills) students gained from SIWES?
3. What ways are SIWES experience effective?

Methodology

Research Design: This study was descriptive survey.

Population of the Study: The population consisted of 400 level Home Economics students who had finished their students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) in Abia State. It was discovered in the course of the study that only MOUAAU and ABSU have 400 levels Home Economics that have finished SIWES.

The population of the study was from two government universities in Abia state, MOUAAU and ABSU. The population was made up of a total number of 42 students. The sample used was all the home economics students in both universities, which gave the researcher a total number of forty two (42).

Sample and Sampling Techniques: All the 400 level Home Economics students in MOUAAU and ABSU that have attended SIWES were used. Seventeen (17) students from ABSU, One (1) students from Home Economics Education and Twenty four (24) from Home Economics, Hotel and tourism in MOUAAU. The above samples were Forty two (42) in

number and all of them were used for the study as they were too small to be sampled.

Instrument for Data Collection: A questionnaire titled "Assessment of SIWES experience of Home Economics Students" (ASEHES) was used. The questionnaire was made up of two parts. Part one sought information on the respondents' bio-data. Part two had three sections. Section A comprised of 15 items on benefits of SIWES to home economics, section B comprised of 10 items on students' assessment of SIWES to their practical skills in home economics, while section C had 9 items on students' rating on the effectiveness of their SIWES experiences. The items were based on a 4-point rating scale of "strongly agree" (4 points), "agree" (3

points), "disagree" (2 points), and "strongly disagree" (1 point). The instrument was validated by three Home economics lecturers.

Method of Data Collection: The copies of the questionnaires were administered on the sampled respondents through the help of research assistants. All the 42 copies distributed were retrieved and used for the study. The mean scores were used in answering the research question. Since the items were based on a 4-point scale with an average of 2.50 in interpreting the results, items with mean ratings up to 2.50 and above were regarded as agree. While items with mean ratings below 2.50 were regarded as disagree.

Findings of the Study

Table1: Mean Response on areas of skill enhancement

S/No	SIWES enhanced practical skills in:	Mean	Remark
1.	Cloth production	3.66	Agree
2.	Weaving of materials	3.66	Agreed
3.	Sewing and designing	3.38	Agreed
4.	Soap and detergent making	3.97	Agreed
5.	Hotel management	3.34	Agreed
6.	Making of ice-creams and juice	3.06	Agreed
7.	Planning of meals for various groups	3.50	Agreed
8.	Hair dressing	2.84	Agreed
9.	Craft production	3.34	Agreed
10.	Making of models and toys	3.19	Agreed
11.	Interior decoration	3.03	Agreed
12.	Catering	3.00	Agreed
13.	Baking	3.16	Agreed
14.	Making flour	2.59	Agreed
15.	Pottery	2.63	Agreed

Table 1 shows that the entire items scored above 2.50. Hence, the respondents agree that SIWES enhances their practical skills and even acquisition of more skills in Home economics.

Table 2: Mean Response on abilities (skills) acquired by students from SIWES

Abilities (skills) acquired in SIWES	Mean \bar{x}	Remark
1. Ability to select targeted consumers.	3.09	Agreed
2. Ability to have a voice in decision making in practical skills in home economics	2.84	Agreed
3. Ability to select a better market for your produced goods	3.13	Agreed
4. Ability to manage material and resources for effective production in economics.	3.25	Agreed
5. Ability to manage financial resources.	3.53	Agreed
6. Ability to know how to save and invest judiciously.	4.00	Agreed
7. Ability to know what consumer wants in the field of home economics	3.00	Agreed
8. Ability to speak and interact with different groups of people	4.73	Agreed
9. Ability to appear presentable as a home economist.	3.44	Agreed
10. Ability to identify product in seasons.	2.79	Agreed

Table 2 shows that the entire items scored above the mean cut off 2.50. The respondents therefore agreed that SIWES benefits students of Home economics.

Table 3: Mean responses on ways SIWES experiences was effective.

S/N Effectiveness of their SIWES experiences	Mean	Remark
1. SIWES has helped me gain new and vital information's about my field of study.	2.59	Agreed
2. SIWES has enhanced my mindset to a more practical tool.	3.06	Agreed
3. It has made me to be skilled and practically inclined.	3.13	Agreed
4. SIWES has enhanced my Ability to engage in home management activities.	3.38	Agreed
5. It has made me to be competent and exposed to the labor market.	2.25	Agreed
6. SIWES has made me to be self reliant and employable.	3.00	Agreed
7. SIWES has made me to be able to express and communicate with the outside world.	2.79	Agreed
8. SIWES has exposed me to many entrepreneurial skills	2.84	Agreed
9. SIWES helps me to appreciate home economics based Occupation	3.31	Agreed

Table 3 shows that the entire items scored above 2.50. The respondents thus agree that SIWES has effectively

affected and enhanced their experiences as students in the field of Home economics.

Discussion of the Findings

From the data collected and analyzed in research question one. It is observed that SIWES enhances the acquisition of skills and improves the practical skills of students in home economics. Since what they are involved in is a more practical approach rather than the theoretical approach in the school, it enhances their skills and makes them more practically oriented in their field of studies. This is in line with Nse (2012), SIWES affords the students the opportunity to familiarize and experiment on different machines in work activities while attending school.

From the data collected and analyzed in research question two: it is observed that SIWES benefits students in home economics. Students of Home economics highly benefit from the SIWES program, in that they are made to be entrepreneurial in nature. They are taught and equipped physically and technically (skills acquisition). Nse (2012), SIWES is a skill development program designed to prepare students of universities, polytechnics/ monotechnics and college of education to transit from school environment to work environment. SIWES has made students to be able to identify problems and work towards solving them more practically; it has also helped students in managing resources effectively and investing judiciously. Since skills acquisition is more organized, coordinated and developed for knowledge, experience and mastering of the job, SIWES

celebrates all of this attributes because its students are endowed with more experience, skills and highly developed for work ahead of the society.

Research question three discusses effect of SIWES experience on Home economics. It is based on their practical experience. It adds to students experiences in practical course in Home economics. Obeta (2015) agreed that Home economics is a skill-oriented field of study noted for its capability of equipping learners with skills that can rightly make the individual to be self employed, an employer of labour and also it into the labour sector. In other to actualize the goals, Ugwuanyi (2010) agreed that SIWES gives students such experience and its effectiveness has kept the students going in their field of study. This is because according to Ene-Obong (2006) graduates of Home economics at the tertiary level need to be industrious, creative and enterprising to be able to meet the challenges of daily living. With this opinion by Ene-Obong the effectiveness of SIWES and students experience is fulfilled as posed in the objective of SIWES program.

Conclusion

When the economy fails to generate enough jobs for all who are able and willing to work, potential production of goods and services are irretrievably lost. (SIWES as a program has effectively enhanced and equipped students of Home economics to withstand certain level of

unemployment, since they are inculcated with various skills in their field of learning. Students have greatly benefited from SIWES program all over in the field of Home economics. One is optimistic that graduates from the field of Home economics would be able to face the labor force and be self employed. As pointed out by graduates of Home economics at the tertiary level need to be industrious, creative and enterprising to be able to meet the challenges of daily living. SIWES program being a skills acquisition program blends theory with practice in the industrial and commercial activities of our national economy.

Recommendations

Based on the recommendations on the findings, the following are made.

1. SIWES programs should be made a one year program for students in home economics, since Home economics is more of a practical and skill oriented course.
2. Students should be monitored and supervised effectively in order to acquire more skills by attending and completing the SIWES programs.
3. Tertiary institutions should try to affiliate with industries and organizations which are more focused on the field of Home economics so that students can be sent to them for practical experience.
4. The university should try as much as possible to adhere to the instructions of the federal

government of Nigeria by placing the IT students at various offices and industries. This can be achieved using the guidance and counseling unit.

5. The students should be supervised and monitored very well while on industrial attachment.
6. Logbooks should be signed at the place of industrial attachment during the supervisor's visit to make sure that students do not fill them up when the training is over.
7. Federal Government should adequately fund the SIWES programme, so that all the materials needed are made available and that no one is owed SIWES allowance at the end.

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