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STUDENTS INDUSTRIAL WORK EXPERIENCE (SIWES) PROGRAMMME AS A TOOL FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS PREPARATION FOR THE LABOUR MARKET: A STUDY OF FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, ZARIA

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of siwes programme on business education students' level of preparation for the labour market with emphasis on Federal College of Education, Zaria. Four objectives were formulated to examine industrial skill acquired by business education students for preparation for the labour market. Four research questions were also raised in line with the objectives. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all NCE III Business Education students in Federal College of Education, Zaria. The total population is two hundred and forty-three (243) students. Using simple random sampling techniques, a sample size of 122 (50%) students was drawn from the population. The instrument used was the structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistical tools were used in analyzing the data collected. Findings showed that business education students acquire industrial skills in preparation for labour market. The study concluded that SIWES is of great benefit to students of Business Education. 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. The study recommends that Students' Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES) needs to be strengthened by all concerned stakeholders in order for its objectives to be realized.

Keywords: SIWES, Business Education, Labour Market, Preparation and Skill.

1. 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 (Imeokpariam, 2014).

In a similar vein, Osuala (2014) 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) (Osuala, 2014).

SIWES is one of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) programme which started 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 (2016), 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, 2016). 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 (2016), 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, 2019). Ihebereme (2016) 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.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem for this study is that there appears to be a wide gap between the knowledge possessed by graduates and the requirements of business organizations. Ibrahim and Dandago (2013) posited that business education students are not equipped with the generic skills required for their employability in the Nigerian labour market in the present advanced technological era. The SIWES is supposed to bridge the gap and provide the students with the current knowledge of the business world. This has not been the case as students appear to face a lot of difficulties before, during and after the SIWES programme. Infact, personal observation shows that some students do not even undertake the industrial training which is scheduled for 6 months after their second year in the college or University.

The researcher became interested in finding out from business education students who have taken part in the scheme, how they would evaluate the scheme. It is on the basis of this that the researchers intend to evaluate the benefits and challenges confronting SIWES.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to examine industrial skill acquired by business education students, experiences acquired by business education student in preparation for the labour market. The study also examines business education students' level of handling equipment and machinery for preparation in the labour market and the extent to which knowledge acquired in Siwes can be applied to real work and industrial situation in the labour market.

This study also focused on the impact of SIWES programme on Business education student's level of preparation for the labour market. The study is delimited to NCE III Business Education students in Federal College of Education, Zaria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Definition

Student industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) is a skill development program designed to expose and prepare students for real work in which they are likely to meet in their various discipline after graduation from school. Usman & Tasmin (2015) states that SIWES is designed to help and consolidate school/industry collaboration of undergraduate students undergoing courses in Science, Engineering and Technology and other professional courses to acquire necessary practical skills in addition to theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom. It is a program that uses the work environment to expose students to work methods and provide needed experience in handling tools, machinery and equipment that may not be available in educational institutions.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Olugbenga (2009) carried out a study which adopted the survey design involving a population of 50 students in the School of Applied Sciences, Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria. The study which seek to find out the views of students on the adequacy of skills acquired during SIWES found out that students did not acquire adequate skills on ground that the place of attachment do not have modern equipment to work with. Furthermore, students were not given free access to some equipment and that the duration of SIWES was inadequate to learn anything meaningful among others. The study recommended that since the duration is short, students should attach themselves in places where practical experience can be acquired on weekend basis, entrepreneurship component should be infused into the programme and that incentives should be offered to employees to motivate them to accept students and give them the needed experience and skill exposure that will adequately prepare them for world of work.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Experiential learning theory as developed by Kolb and Kolb (2005). The theory puts forward by the adherent of learning theory are six altogether in the following order. Learning is seen as best conceived as a process, meaning that it has clearly stated activities and outcomes. All learning is relearning, in other words, the more a learner is exposed to the same activity or subject, the more likely the learner will experience new ideas each time. Kolb and Kolb (2005) reasoned that learning is a product of experience and that experiences occur through four modes which they identified as concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation and active experimentation. They concluded by suggesting that where skill training is concerned, skill training model should be designed to meet specific skill demand if it is to be effective. This explains why students of business education are often encouraged to seek apprenticeship in firms that provides the specific type of skill training they need in order to be relevant in the world of work.

3. Methodology

This study utilized survey design since the researcher was interested in assessing student's opinions. This is in agreement with Nworgu as cited in Omoroguiwa (2016) 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. The population of the study consisted of all NCE III Business Education students in Federal Colleges of Education, Zaria.

3.1 Population and Sample Size

The total population is two hundred and forty-three (243) students**.** The sample size for the study was 122 students representing 50% of the population.

3.2 Sampling Techniques

The simple 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. The instrument used was the structured questionnaire. The descriptive statistical tools were used in analyzing the data collated. The descriptive statistics such as mean was 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.

4. Data 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, summary of findings and discussion of Findings.

Research Questions One: What is the industrial skill acquired by business education students in preparation for the labour market?

Table 1: Mean Analysis showing the industrial skill acquired by business education students in preparation for the labour market

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	∑f×	Mean	Remark
1.	Business education students are exposed to managerial skill	200	120	20	22	362	2.97	Agreed
2.	Business education students are exposed to office skill	400	6	20	10	436	3.57	Agreed
3.	Business education students are exposed to oral and written communication skill	280	60	30	17	387	3.17	Agreed
4.	Business education students are exposed to time management skill	160	120	40	22	342	2.80	Agreed
5.	Business education students are exposed to professional development skill	280	90	10	10	390	3.39	Agreed
6.	Business education students are exposed to accounting practices	400	3	22	10	435	3.57	Agreed
7.	Business education students are exposed to marketing practices	320	60	40	2	422	3.46	Agreed
Average Mean							3.28	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 shows that the respondents to item 1 - 7 had mean score above 2.50 (cut off mean) which is the level of acceptance. This result shows that majority of the respondents agreed that business education students acquires industrial skills for preparation for labour market. The study showed that managerial skills, office skill, communication skills, time management skills, professional development skills and accounting skills were all skills acquired during industrial training.

Research Question Two: What are the experiences acquired by business education students in preparation for the labour market?

Table 2: Mean Analysis on the experiences acquired by business education students in preparation for the labour market

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	∑f×	Mean	Remark
8.	Student knows how to receive, attend to, interpret, and respond to verbal messages and other cues such as body language in ways that are appropriate to the purpose.	280	60	40	12	392	3.21	Agreed
9.	Business education students can identify need for data, obtain it from existing sources or create it, and evaluate its relevance and accuracy.	240	60	60	12	372	3.05	Agreed
10.	Business education students are exposed on how to employ computers to acquire, organize, analyze and communicate information.	240	60	44	20	364	2.98	Agreed
11.	Business education students are exposed on how to generate new ideas, use imagination freely, combine ideas or information in new ways, make connections between seemingly unrelated ideas and reshape goals.	200	90	40	22	352	2.89	Agreed
12.	Business education students are exposed on how to generate specific goals and constraints,	160	90	44	30	324	2.66	Agreed
13.	Student are exposed to the basic income statement available in an organization	160	120	44	20	344	2.82	Agreed
14.	Students are exposed to computation of financial records in an organization.	320	30	40	12	402	3.30	Agreed
Average Mean								Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 shows that the respondents to item 8 - 14 had mean score above 2.50 (cut off mean) which is the level of acceptance. This result shows that majority of the respondents agreed that business education students acquires experiences in preparation for the labour market.

Research Question Three: What is the extent of business education student's level of handling equipment and machinery in preparation for the labour market?

Table 3: Mean Analysis on the extent of business education students level of handling equipment and machinery in preparation for the labour market

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	∑f×	Mean	Remark
15	I have ability to use photocopying machine	80	90	80	32	282	2.31	Disagreed
16	I am exposed to the use of computer	80	90	64	40	274	2.25	Disagreed
17	I understand overall intent and proper procedures for setting up computer	80	60	100	32	272	2.23	Disagreed
18	I am exposed to the use of Internet facilities	120	30	84	40	274	2.25	Disagreed
19	I am exposed to the use of printers	60	51	60	60	231	1.89	Disagreed
20	I am exposed to the use of fax machine	80	6	40	80	206	1.69	Disagreed
21	I am exposed to the basic office machines	40	6	20	100	166	1.36	Disagreed

	in a modern office.							
Average Mean								Disagreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 shows that the respondents to item 15 - 21 had mean score below 2.50 (cut off mean) which is the level of rejection. This result shows that majority of the respondents disagreed to business education students level of handling equipment and machinery in preparation for the labour market.

Research Question Four: To what extent can knowledge acquired in SIWES be applied to real work and industrial situation in the labour market?

Table 4: Mean Analysis on extent can knowledge acquired in SIWES beapplied to real work and industrial situation in the labour market

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	∑f×	Mean	Remark
22.	The knowledge I acquire in SIWES prepares me for employment	200	90	40	22	352	2.89	Agreed
23.	The knowledge I acquire in SIWES makes transition from school to work easier and enhances professional development.	160	90	44	30	324	2.66	Agreed
24.	Knowledge acquired in SIWES provided me with avenue for technical skill development, experience and professional development.	160	120	44	20	344	2.82	Agreed
25.	SIWES provide students with experience	320	30	40	12	402	3.30	Agreed
26.	Knowledge acquired in SIWES provided me with avenue for professional development.	120	120	40	32	312	2.56	Agreed
Average Mean								Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 shows that the respondents to item 22 - 26 had mean score above 2.50 (cut off mean) which is the level of acceptance. This result shows that majority of the respondents agreed that knowledge acquired in SIWES can be applied to real work and industrial situation in the labour market.

4.1 Summary of Findings

The following are the findings of the study:-

1. Business education students acquire industrial skills in preparation for labour market. The study showed that managerial skills, office skill, communication skills, time management skills, professional development skills and accounting skills were all skills acquired during industrial training.
2. Business education students acquire experiences in preparation for the labour market.
3. Business education student's level of handling equipment and machinery in preparation for the labour market is low.
4. Knowledge acquired in SIWES can be applied to real work and industrial situation in the labour market.

4.2 Discussion of Finding

Research question one revealed that Business education students acquires industrial skills in preparation for labour market. This finding corroborates the findings of Ibrahim (2016) where the author stressed that there is a significant relationship between business education and student's acquisition of industrial skills. Uramah

(2013) supports these findings where the author stressed that business education students through SIWES acquire skill necessary for survival in the world of work.

Research question two revealed that business education students acquire experiences in preparation for the labour market. Imeokparia and Ediagbonya (2014) also support this finding in the studies on employability and they stressed that business education students stand a chance of benefitting greatly form SIWES especially in the area of skill acquisition and experience. The study conducted by Isah (2013) corroborates this finding where the author stressed that SIWES prepares business education students to fit-in readily for employment in industries and commerce. These students are exposed to the experience needed for growth in their chosen career.

Research question three revealed that business education student's level of handling equipment and machinery in preparation for the labour market is low. Mohammed (2017) also affirmed the findings of this study where the author stressed that SIWES helps business education students to gain knowledge and skills necessary to operate different offices machines.

Research question four revealed that knowledge acquired in SIWES can be applied to real work and industrial situation in the labour market. This finding was also supported by Awojobi (2012) where the author stressed that many students for the SIWES programme could not find relevant placement that would enhance their course of study.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that SIWES is of great benefit to students of Business Education. It 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.

This empirical investigation has revealed some findings and based on that, the following recommendations are advanced: Organizations should always provide the necessary guidance and support needed for the smooth running of the SIWES programme. Also, students should be exposed to managerial skills, office skill, communication skill, time management skill and professional development skills which are part of the skill that student can learn in the organization. There should be more collaborative efforts or liaison between business organizations and institutions of learning. These will go a long way in preparing student for the labour market. Business organizations should strive to provide more up-to-date office automations in the training of business education students on SIWES. Organizations should always accept students for SIWES and subsequently assign them to relevant jobs to exposed students to real work and industrial situation for the labour market.

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