

IMPROVING COMPETENCIES OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION THROUGH STUDENTS' INDUSTRIAL WORK EXPERIENCE SCHEME IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the role of students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South Nigeria. A survey research design was used. The population for the study comprised 761 respondents and a sample size of 155 Business Education lecturers and industry-based supervisors was used in the nine Colleges of education and 12 industries in South-South Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation was used for answering research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that SIWES strategies improve the competencies of business education students of college of education in South-South states of Nigeria the author recommended among others that NCCE during accreditation should endeavour to check students' log books if they truly participated in the programme.

Keyword: Business Education, Competencies Improvement, Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme.

Introduction

Business Education is a specialized phase of vocational education that prepares beneficiary to enter teaching and office occupations as capable and intelligent members of the labour force. Business Education programme in Nigerian tertiary institutions is offered under the following options: Secretarial Education, Accounting Education and Marketing/Distributive Education (Osuala, 2009). Its primary objective is the acquisition of skills and competencies for gainful employment in their professional and occupational areas. Orifa (2004) explained that Business Education programme are the type of educational programme that have to do with knowledge and skills which develop students physically, mentally and equip them to be self-dependent. Certain materials and equipment are needed to be provided in Business Education programme such as computers, typewriters, photocopying machines, tape recorders, multi-purpose projectors, word processors, scanning machines and convertible desks. These equipment and materials can only be used by qualified and



experienced business educators. To achieve success, adequate number of lecturers are also needed to handle courses in business education programmes.

Business Education is seen as a discipline meant to prepare individuals economically, politically, socially and technologically and for transforming human resources and economic empowerment of people (Oduma, 2012). Human beings have greater and valuable roles to play in the process of economic development and growth. Consequently, the Business Education curriculum of institutions which prepared to meet different challenges in practical skill acquisitions. Business Education implies education for and about business. In recognition of the importance of business education to a country's growth and development, the Nigerian government introduced Business Education programme into the curriculum as contained in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2013). In line with this, a number of colleges of education and universities also introduced business education into their programme. The importance of business education towards capacity building is further authenticated by the fact that it has become a choice subject in most colleges of education and in a number of universities – federal, state and private.

A functional business education programme requires effective SIWES programme with relevant industries which the graduates will serve. Although, Business Education students are exposed to Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) but Odu (2010) lamented that the experiences students acquire from these schemes are not adequate for their training needs. Schools need to relate with industries for research assistance and collaborations, curriculum planning, infrastructural provision, scholarships, seminars and field trips. Gbenedio (2012) also noted that many academic programmes tend to exist in isolation, with few connections between learning institutions and industries, even between those in the same geographical area. The isolation of academic programme from learning institutions and industries will not function well for the achievement of the educational goals. Hence the learning institutions need to partner well with industries for effective acquisitions of skills and proper adaptation of graduates.

Qualified and experienced lecturers are needed in colleges of education to handle courses in business education programme. According to Osuala (2009) business education courses must be handled by well trained and motivated persons with academic and professional competencies which will match the industrial expectations. The lecturers in business education programme in the colleges of education comprised male and female business educators. Male lecturers tend to possess more competencies in mathematics related courses than female lecturers, in the other hands, female lecturers have more competencies in courses like typewriting, shorthand, word processing and marketing (Koko, 2010). Akpan (2014) found that male lecturers that handled courses in Business Education programme taught well in accounting related courses than the female lecturers in most cases while the female lecturers handled secretarial and marketing courses effectively. The lecturers work as a team in ensuring that the cooperative objectives of Business Education are achieved as related to industrial training programme in institutions and the industrial sectors. Industry based-supervisors are supervising agency that supervise students on attachment in their industries, who also train and sign students log books, assess students' performances and grade accordingly.

Further, one of the goals of Nigeria tertiary education is the acquisition of physical and intellectual skills, which will enhance abilities of individuals to be self-reliant and independent as well as useful members of the society. It is the statutory duty of Nigerian tertiary institutions to groom the required human resources through relevant manpower trainings to acquire the abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge (Babaloa, 2010). Thus, an outstanding human capital assumption is that after finishing formal tertiary education, graduates should be able to make a successful transition from these institutions of higher learning to become productive workers, self-reliant entrepreneurs, responsible parents, good citizens, selfless leaders and live healthy lives. It is in this

regards that business education has gained momentum as a specialized discipline of training designed to equip students or individuals with skills, knowledge, attitude and understandings. Business education is one of the indispensable programme of studies in vocational education which, provide individuals with abilities, knowledge, competences and aptitudes for employment and self-actualization. The training of individuals in this perspective to become self-dependant and increase capacity development were the progressive means to give impetus for industrial training schemes in order to enhance the competencies of business education students and achieve the objectives of National Policy on Education.

College of Education is among the tertiary levels of education in Nigeria's educational system, which is aimed at preparing teachers with the necessary teaching skills, competencies and methods. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is the regulatory body for colleges of Education in Nigeria. It prepares Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) for the different programme in the colleges of education. Furthermore, the NCCE either deliberately or by omission did not include MAS for important human resources generating programme as the Business Education Programme in the education system (Odu, 2010). These colleges have developed their own Minimum Academic Standards for the education and training of Business Education NCE graduates. The body has proposed that, after finishing formal tertiary education, graduates should be able to make a successful transition from these institutions of higher learning's to become productive workers, self-reliant entrepreneurs, responsible parents, good citizens, selfless leaders and live healthily. Currently, there are 82 Colleges of Education in Nigeria out of which nine Colleges of Education are located in South-South States of Nigeria. (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2017).

South-South Nigeria is one of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria and it is made up of six states, namely; Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. These states share common boundaries and the people have similar occupations, such as farming, fishing, civil service and trading. There are presence of many industries and multi-national companies in South-South States of Nigeria. South-South States support all educational programmes financially, provide equipment and other materials for schools and also help in organizing seminars/workshops for teachers and lecturers as training schemes which enhance their experiences (Obomanu, 2000).

In the same vein, educational institutions and industrial sectors create enabling environments for students to acquire hands-on experience, knowledge skills and appropriate attitudes to work. Within communities are industries that have highly skilled human resources for productions, functional facilities and raw materials that can be very useful in the practical training of business education students. Rossi (2010) stated that industries through collaboration with schools could be made to meaningfully contribute to the trainings of students in appropriate skills that relate to their interests. Therefore, it has become imperative that industries should be actively involved in the skills trainings of business education students to complement classroom experiences in order to acquaint them with skills needed for employment in the industries after graduation. Business education departments should tap the energies and synergies as well as the resources of the industries to the full. An effective relationship between the schools and the industries will compel the industries to make their expertise, equipment and expendable materials available for the effective learning of the students. Okorie (2001) noted that as the industries participate in the training of the students, certain deficiencies that existed in the training of the students would be reduced if not completely eliminated, thereby improving students skills and competencies.

Hornby (2001) defined improvement as the act of making something better than before. Improving means a process of enhancing students' knowledge, skills and attitudes in a specialized area of study. SIWES programme is ongoing in the institutions with the aim of enhancing students

practical skills needed in the world of work. The competencies of business education students needed to be improved through functional SIWES programme. Competency in the view of Spence and Spira (2003) is the standardized requirement for an individual to properly perform a specific job. It is a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve performances. Competencies in business education programme are those knowledges, skills and attitudes required by business education students for success for performance in their work place, such as Information Communication Technology (ICT) competencies, accounting competencies, marketing competencies, Managerial competencies and risk Management competencies. Hence, they can be achieved through SIWES.

According to Ochiagha (2005), Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a skill-training programme designed to expose and prepare students of institutions of higher learning for industrial work situation they are likely to meet on graduation. Ochiagha (2005) emphasises that the scheme is meant to familiarize students with work methods and expose them to practical experience in handling equipment and machinery that are usually not available in their educational institutions. The scheme provides practice to what has been learnt in theory; to equip the students adequately for successful entry and progress in their chosen careers. The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme is meant to aid students acquire skills while they are still in school to provide them with background for entry into occupations after graduation. According to Oyedele (2000), business education graduates do not possess the adequate skills to cope in the industries, and most business education graduates performed poorly in their place of work. Upon this background, therefore, the need arose to determine how to improve the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education by a functional SIWES in South-South states of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Some Nigeria Colleges of Education still show poor level in monitoring students during SIWES programme. Students on their part, seem to be dissatisfied with the programme. Some institutions up to date are still not adhering to ITF regulations by not establishing functional SIWES units to carry out the supposed function. Research showed that Business Education Students who claimed to have undergone SIWES programme during their cause of study, generally lacks the needed competences to be used in the world of work; this means they could not perform in the industries, establishing this empirically was therefore, the task of this study.

An effective business education programme requires a functional SIWES programme with relevant industries where the graduates will work. The researcher was thus worried that business education graduates do not possess the necessary or required skills and competencies to cope with the world of work. Most business education students of College of education lacks computer and typewriting skills, accounting competencies and managerial competencies. Hence, the need to determine SIWES related strategies for improving the competencies of business education students of colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The Purpose of the study was to determine the strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education through SIWES in South-South states of Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the:

1. NCCE related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria.

2. Government related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

Research Question 1: What are the NCCE related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South Nigeria?

Research Question 2: What are the government related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference the opinions between Business Education lectures and industry Based-Supervisors on NCCE related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students in South-South Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference on the opinions between Business Education lectures and industry Based-Supervisors on government related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of business education students in South-South Nigeria.

Method

Research Design

A deceptive survey design was used to achieve the purpose of the study. This design according to Kothari and Garg (2014) is the method of securing information concerning a phenomenon under study from all or a selected number of respondents of the concerned universe.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised of 761 respondents and a sample size of 155 Business Education lecturers and industry-based supervisors was used in the nine Colleges of education and 12 industries in South-South Nigeria.

Data Collection Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The instrument had a 4-point rating scale coded as: 4=Strongly Agree; 3=Agree; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree.

Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts and necessary corrections and suggestions by the experts were affected by the researchers to get the final draft of the instrument with 25 items. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of instrument. Reliability coefficient of 0.76 grand was obtained, which inducted a high correlation, given credence that the instrument is highly reliable. Hence, the instrument was used to obtain data for this study.

Data Analysis

Mean with standard deviation was used for answering research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses of no significant difference at .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the NCCE related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of lecturers and supervisors on NCCE related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students.

S/N	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	During accreditation NCCE should check students logbooks	87	60	7	1	3.50	1.22	SA
2.	NCCE checking whether the student actually go for the SIWES programme.	85	55	8	7	3.41	0.92	A
3.	NCCE checking whether they are properly supervised each time.	90	51	10	4	3.46	0.98	A
4.	NCCE checking whether students go to the approve industries that relate to their course of study.	92	60	3	0	3.57	0.91	SA
5.	NCCE using need assessment	83	62	4	1	3.40	0.97	A
6.	NCCE checking the student attendance register strictly	80	65	5	5	3.42	1.15	A
7.	NCCE checking students disciplinary book during SIWES.	95	53	5	2	3.56	1.06	SA
8.	NCCE developing monitor and review job specification of SIWES students.	74	61	12	8	3.30	0.92	A
9.	NCCE organizing regularly research into the development of SIWES in line with the advanced modern technology.	100	50	3	2	3.60	0.84	SA
10.	NCCE checking student SIWES report.	103	50	2	0	3.65	0.95	A
Cluster Mean/ Standard Deviation						3.49	1.00	SA

Result in Table 1 revealed that the respondent agreed that items number 1, 4, 7, 9 and 10 as strongly agreed. Hence their means were 3.50, 3.57, 3.56, 3.60 and 3.65 respectively. This means that NCCE related SIWES strategies are necessary for improving the competencies of Business Education student in South-South state of Nigeria. Other items number 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11 under NCCE related SIWES strategies are required for improving the competencies of Business Education Students. The mean values ranging from 3.30 to 3.65 and the grand mean of 3.49 which confirm that. The table also indicates the standard deviation ranging from 0.84 to 1.22 and the cluster standard deviation as 1.00. The values are less than 1.96 indicates that the response of the respondents is not divergent.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference the opinions between Business Education lectures and industry Based-Supervisors on NCCE related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students in South-South Nigeria.

Table 2: Z-test analysis of lecturers and supervisors on NCCE related strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students.

Group	N	X	SD	df	Z-cal	Z-Crit	Decision
Lecturers	131	2.94	0.92	153	0.74	1.96	Not Significant
Supervisors	24	3.25	0.96				

Result in Table 2 shows that there was no significant difference between the opinions of Business Education lecturers and industry based- supervisors the NCCE related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of Colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria. The calculated Z-value of 0.74 was less than the critical value of 1.96 at 153 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis 3 was not rejected.

Research Question 2: What are the government related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of lecturers and supervisors on government-related strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students

S/N	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
11.	Adequate funding SIWES programme	100	50	5	0	3.61	1.29	SA
12.	Government payment of SIWES allowances to students	104	51	0	0	3.67	0.93	SA
13.	Organizing research and training	84	51	16	4	3.37	1.09	A
14.	Government should encourage and supporting industries to allow students come for SIWES programme.	95	52	6	2	3.55	0.98	SA
15.	Government providing equipment and mechines students need for SIWES programme.	92	53	2	8	3.48	0.97	A
16.	Government monitoring of the SIWES programme.	89	60	5	1	3.54	0.84	SA
17.	Government should ensure regular payment of workers salary	56	74	15	10	3.14	0.77	A
18.	Adequate funding of research and training on SIWES programme.	105	40	7	3	3.59	1.15	SA
19.	Employing qualified and experienced graduates	90	50	13	2	3.47	0.90	A
20.	Employing qualified graduates	75	60	17	3	3.34	1.29	A
21.	Provision of adequate infrastructure	90	55	8	2	3.50	1.15	SA
22.	Government and colleges should award contract to industries	50	103	1	1	3.30	1.05	A
23.	Cooperation of industrial managers with college authority	57	60	4	4	3.48	1.00	A
24.	Ensuring high salary scale of staff	61	74	78	2	3.25	0.76	A
25.	Providing the necessary instructional materials	83	43	11	4	3.14	1.05	A
Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation						3.42	1.02	A

Table 3 revealed that respondents agreed on items number 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, and 21 as strongly agreed. Hence, their means were 3.61, 3.67, 3.55, 3.54, 3.95 and 3.50 respectively, this means that adequate funding of SIWES programme, payment of SIWES allowances to students, government support to industries, proper monitoring of SIWES programme and provision of equipment are necessary for improving the competencies of Business Education students in South-South states of Nigeria. Subsequently, the respondents agreed that Items number 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 23 and 25 respectively, are necessary for improving the competencies of Business Education students. Hence, their means ratings were 3.37, 3.48, 3.14, 3.47, 3.34, 3.30, 3.48, 3.25 and 3.14. The grand mean of 3.42 concurs to that. The table also showed their standard deviation ranging from 0.84 to 1.29, this means closeness of opinions. The cluster standard deviation of 1.02 also supported that assertion.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference on the opinions between Business Education lectures and industry Based-Supervisors on government related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of business education students in South-South Nigeria.

Table 4: Z-test analysis of lecturers and supervisors on government related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students.

Group	N	X	SD	df	Z-cal	Z-Crit	Decision
Lecturers	131	3.31	0.86	153	0.80	1.96	Not Significant
Supervisors	24	2.98	0.97				

Result in Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference between the opinions of Business Education lecturers and industry based- supervisors on government related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of Colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria. The calculated Z-value of 0.80 was less than the critical value of 1.96 at 153 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis 3 was not rejected.

Discussion

Research question 1 addressed the issue of NCCE related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria. Table 4 revealed that majority of the respondents considered all the items as agreed. This findings is in line with the findings of Asuquo (2005) that shows the poor attitudes to the scheme which lead non-strict checking of students logbooks and many students avoid participating in SIWES programme. The researcher found that if NCCE should check students logbook, whether they actual go to SIWES programme would help to make the programme effective. The findings of this study indicated that NCCE related SIWES strategies would improve the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education. There was no significant difference between the opinions of Business Education lecturers and industry based- supervisors on the NCCE related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of Colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria. The researcher opinioned that NCCE have provided the necessary curriculum to include effective SIWES in colleges of education, which likely leads to improvement of student competencies.

Research question 2 sought to determine government related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria. Table 4 revealed that majority of the respondents considered items 1 to 12 agreed.

This finding is in line the findings of Nwanoruo (2009) which revealed government that legislation on industrial training should be presented and if necessary compel industries to be involved with collaborative activities. Government support to industries includes; provision of equipment and materials to relevant industries for SIWES programme. The findings of the study show that government related SIWES strategies would improve the competencies of Business Education students of colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria. There was no significant difference between the opinions of business education lecturers and industry based- supervisors on the government related SIWES strategies for improving the competencies of Business Education students of Colleges of education in South-South states of Nigeria. In the researcher opinion, the government has created an agency and provides some fund for students' industrial training scheme earlier before now.

Conclusion

It is certain that SIWES is very important to the acquisition and competencies required by Business Education students of Colleges of education to perform efficiently after graduation. Some Colleges of education however, do not have all the equipment and materials that are needed by students for skill acquisition but are present in some industries. Therefore an effective SIWES is the only solution. Consequently, it could be observed from the findings that an effective SIWES could improve students' competencies in the area of ICT, management, accounting, and market. However, SIWES performed poorly in the area of equipment and materials handling. It is now the responsibility of SIWES stakeholders like ITF, industries, Colleges of education, Business Education students, among others to ensure that the entire objectives for which SIWES was established should be realized.

Educational Implication

The findings of the study have implications for industrial sectors and the other related fields. Since industries and the other related fields absorb the graduates of the Colleges of education, they would be more dedicated in training the students during the SIWES periods. Secondly, it is a pointer to some industries who did not have the necessary modern equipment and materials, that they should acquire them before participating in students training. The findings of the study have some implications for the NCE Business Education students. The students needed to be serious while on attachment with the industries to acquire the skills and competencies that would help them fit into the world of work with minimum energy after graduation. The findings also have some implications for the ITF. ITF needs to pay the SIWES allowance to students in their respective industries of attachment and not after the SIWES period.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Industrial Trust Fund should endeavour to accredit and shortlist all the industries that have the modern equipment and materials and the list should be sent to institutions.
2. Colleges of education should endeavour to post students into industries that lack modern equipment and materials.
3. Students on SIWES should be made to know of the job specifications so that they will be aware of what they are expected to be learning within the SIWES period.
4. The industry supervisors should endeavour to be more serious with the pogramme, so that students themselves will be dedicated.

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