Strategies for Achieving Sustainability in Teaching and Learning of Clothing and Textiles in Nigerian Institutions of Higher Learning: Abia State in Focus

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A b s t r a c t

This paper ascertained the strategies for sustaining the teaching and learning of clothing and textiles among Home Economics students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This substance is apposite in that students will be able to acquire entrepreneurial skills before their graduation because, clothing and textile is a course of study that inculcates in its beneficiaries entrepreneurial skills. This acquisition of skills will in turn reduce unemployment among youths in the country as the students will not only be self-employed but also be employers of labour. Abia State has three tertiary institutions which offer clothing and textile as part of Home Economics progamme. Twenty-four teachers and 94 students from the sample for the study. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data while the collected data were analysed using mean and bar chart. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.

Keywords: *Strategies, Sustainability, Teaching, Learning and clothing and textile.*

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Background to the Study
Clothing and textile is an arm of Home Economics which deals with the acquisition of skills, knowledge, competency and value that fit an individual wholly and entirely for careers/ occupations in Clothing and textile. Nwaokaomah (2010) pointed out that clothing and textile education is a branch of Home Economics offered in Nigerian tertiary institutions concerned with acquisition and development of practical skills in the beneficiaries. In her own view, Okeke (2005) described Clothing and Textile as an important aspect of Home Economics which helps to develop in individuals the needed skills for personal development . For the teaching and learning of clothing and textile to be sustained, there is need for effective participation on the part of the teachers and students. Teaching and learning requires the active participation of teachers and students (Okorn and Koko, 2005). In his own view, Dunst (2001) posited that engagement in an activity provides opportunities for mastery of the skills through active participation. Mastery of subject matter is another crucial point in the teaching and learning process because no one gives what he has not. According to Okorn and Koko, a good knowledge of the subject matter is essential and fundamental for successful teaching and learning situation.

This implies that good knowledge of clothing and textile by the teacher as well as the utilization of good and captivating instructional methods will not only arouse the interest of the students but also sustain their interests in learning the subject. Dunst, (2001) pointed out that interest in any activity create opportunities for the development of different skills and competencies. Esu (1995) stressed that a competent teacher must possess the ability to select, adapt and develop instructional material for a given set of instructional objectives and students' learning needs. The above facts bring to mind what should be done to sustain the teaching and learning of this subject matter. Sustainability ensures and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony that permit fulfilling social, economic and other requirements of present and future generation (United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2014). It is the ability or capacity of something to be maintained or sustain itself. Sustainability also involves taking what we need to live now without jeopardizing the potential for people in the future. Since, sustainability aims at making the existence of something beneficial to individuals now and in future, Students' interest should not only be awakened in learning this subject matter in school but most importantly to sustain their interest while in school and outside the school.

In Abia state, construction of apparels for different groups of people and other textile crafts form one of the major sources of income to her citizens, thus, creating good opportunity for those with skills in clothing and textile to fit into the business venture either as employees in such clothing business outfits or employers of labour . Despite the very important nature of clothing and textile in creating job opportunities and making beneficiaries of this course of subject, self- reliant, students and teachers show low interest in learning and/or teaching it. This calls for a rethink on the part of Home Economics teachers and students. It is this problem of low interest in this subject area by teachers and students that the researcher tried to find out the causes/ reasons for this problem and strategies for building and sustaining interest of Home Economics teachers and students in clothing and textiles.

The findings of this study will be of benefit to Home Economics teachers and students as it will help them understand the relevance of acquiring the needed skills in clothing and textiles in creating job opportunities. Parents will also find the findings of this study useful. This will make them encourage their children and wards to show high interest in the study of clothing and textiles so as to avert the problem of unemployment after graduation.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to identify Strategies for achieving sustainability in the teaching and learning of Clothing and textiles in Nigerian Institutions of Higher learning in Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study will examine,

i.   Causes/ reasons for low interest in the learning of clothing and textiles in higher institution in Abia State, Nigeria

ii. Way forward to the improvement/ sustaining the teaching and learning of clothing and Textile.

Research Questions: The following research questions guided the study.

i.   What are the causes/ reasons for students' low interest in the learning of clothing and textiles?

ii. What are the strategies for improving and sustaining students' interest in the learning of clothing and textiles?

Methodology

Area of Study

The area of this study is Abia State in Nigeria. In the State, there are three (3) institutions of higher learning that offer clothing and textiles as part of Home Economics.

Design of the Study

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. According to Nworgu (2006), survey design enables groups of people or items to be studied by collecting and analysing data from significant number of people or items perceived to be representative of the entire group. This design was deemed appropriate as it offered the researcher the opportunity of identifying strategies for achieving sustainability in the teaching and learning of clothing and textiles from a significant number of Home Economics teachers and students considered to be representative of Home Economics teachers and students in institutions of higher learning in Abia state.

Population for the Study

The population for the study comprised of the 118 respondents made up of 24 Home Economics teachers and 94 Home Economics (second to final year) students from the three institutions of higher learning in Abia state that offer Home Economics as a course of study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

No sampling was done as all the 118 respondents were involved in the study. The reason for involving all the 118 respondents was due to small size of the population.

Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed based on the purposes of the study. It has two parts- part 1 elicited information on the status of the respondents (staff or students) while the second part elicited information from respondents on the causes of low interest in the study of clothing and textile and the strategies that could help in it's sustenance. A 4- point scale of strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (D) and strongly disagreed (SD) was used. The instrument was validated by two Home Economics experts who critically examined the content and construct of the questionnaire items and necessary reviews were done. The reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha formula.

Data Collection Technique

One hundred and eighteen copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in the three institutions of higher learning in Abia State. Two research assistants helped the researcher to distribute and retrieve the questionnaire from the respondents. Eight-six copies of the questionnaire were properly filled and returned.

Technique of Data Analysis

Mean was used in analysing the data on the two research questions that guided the study and the result presented in both tabular and bar chart forms. A mean response above 2.55 was used as a criterion for acceptance of an item.

Findings of the Study

The following findings were made

1. Seven causes/ reasons for low interest in the study of clothing and textiles were identified. See table I
2. Seven strategies for sustaining interest in the study of clothing and textiles were identified – table 2.

Table I: Mean Responses of Respondents on Causes/ Reasons for Low interest in the teaching and Learning of Clothing and Textiles.

S/N	Causes/ Reasons for Low interest in the Clothing and Textiles.	Teachers Frequencies	Students Frequencies		
		X_T	X_S	$X_{T\&S}$	Decision
1	Drafting and constructing clothing and textile is time demanding	3.50	3.61	3.56	Causes
2	Drafting and construct requires patience	3.54	3.50	3.52	Causes
3	The course is extensive	3.50	3.21	3.36	Causes
4	Pattern drafting is difficult	2.67	2.98	2.83	Causes
5	The teaching method used is poor and technical	2.92	2.85	2.89	Causes
6	Unpicking after sewing is so discouraging	2.558	2.61	2.60	Causes
7	A high level of accuracy is required in drafting and construction	2.83	2.32	2.60	Causes

X_T – Mean Responses of teachers, X_S –Mean Responses of student, $X_{T\&S}$ – Over all mean responses of respondents. Number of teachers = 24, number of students = 62.

Data in table I showed that the time demand, patience, difficulty, expensiveness, poor teaching method and technical nature of clothing and textiles discouragement caused by constant demand by teachers to unpick what was sewn and accuracy required in sewing all these had an overall mean responses above 2.55. Though, in the case of students' responses on the fact that

the accuracy required in sewing put them off scored a mean of 2.32 which is below the cut-off point of 2.55. This indicates that the accuracy required in sewing is not a major cause of low interest in clothing and textiles.
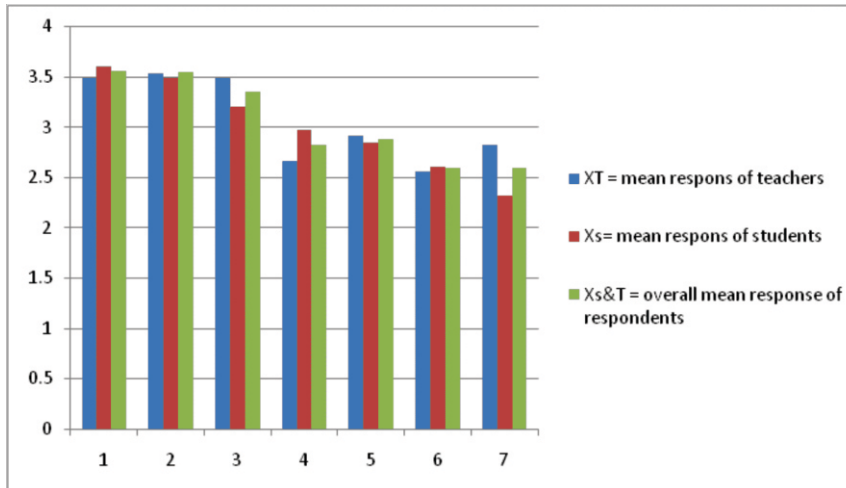

Fig 1.

Table 2: Mean Responses on way forward/ strategies for sustain interest in the study of clothing and textiles

S/N	Strategies/ way forward	Teachers Frequencies	Students Frequencies		
		X_T	X_S	$X_{S\&T}$	Decision
1	Starting with how to use the tape	3.63	3.66	3.67	Strategy
2	Step by step teaching of pattern drafting	3.42	3.45	3.44	Strategy
3	Use of play way method of teaching	3.08	3.11	3.10	Strategy
4	Teaching free hand method drafting pattern	2.88	3.16	3.02	Strategy
5	Encouraging and enforcing study of clothing and textile in secondary schools	3.50	3.27	3.44	Strategy
6	Practising sewing straight on a piece of fabric before stitching garment.	3.58	3.32	3.45	Strategy
7	Use of visual aids in teaching	3.46	3.39	3.43	Strategy

Table 2: show that seven strategies for sustaining interest in the study of clothing and textiles were regarded as appropriate with overall scores ranging from 3.02 to 3.67. This indicates that interest in clothing and textiles study will be sustained when the identified strategies are employed in the teaching and learning of clothing and textiles.
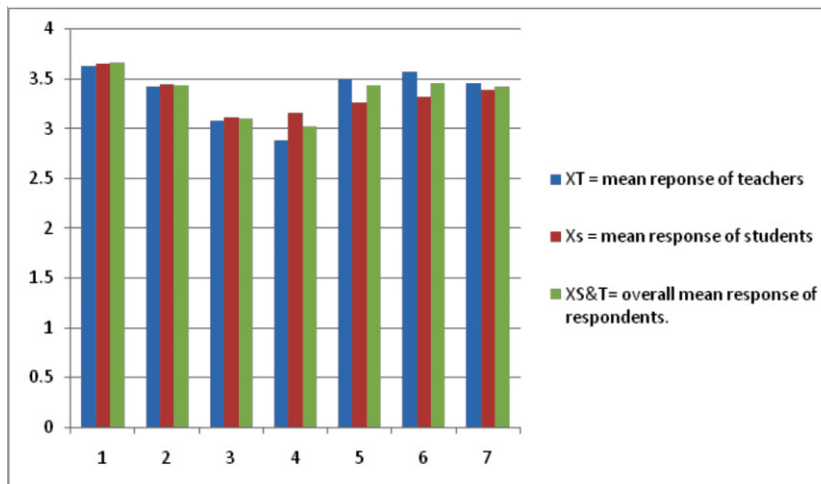
Fig. 2.

Discussion of Findings

All the seven items outlined as causes/ reasons for low interest in the study of clothing and textiles in Nigerian institutions of higher learning had overall mean scores above 2.55 (Table I). Specifically, the time demanding nature of clothing construction, the patience required in pattern drafting and the cost implication of the course had mean responses of 3.56, 3.52 and 3.36 respectively, while constant unpicking of stitches after sewing had mean scores of 2.60 which is very slightly above the cut-off point of 2.55. This implies that unpicking of stitches constantly and the accuracy required in drafting of pattern and construction of garment do not very much affect the interest of students in studying clothing and textiles. Though this problem negatively affects the interest of students slightly, it is still one of the reasons for low interest in the study of clothing and textiles. This is in line with the findings of Okeke (2005) which stated that students abandon clothing projects after being asked to unpick sewing several times. Stressing on the adequacy needed in pattern drafting, Iloeje and Anyakoha, (2012) pointed out that the art of drafting is a skilled craft where precision in measuring and construction is needed.

On the expensiveness of clothing and textiles and the technicality and poor method of teaching which have mean scores of 3.36 and 2.89 respectively. Okeke (2005) noted that many students cannot afford the equipment needed in clothing and textiles because of cost and this affects their ability to learn and participate actively in practical classes. In their own view, Ugwu and Anyakoha (2012) noted that garment construction is obviously cumbersome for a dress maker to embark on drafting blocks for customers. These problems that cause low interest in the study of clothing and textiles should really be tackled in order to tap from the numerous job opportunities embedded in clothing and textiles if the skills were properly taught and learnt.

The study also identified some strategies that will help to kindle interest in the study of clothing and textiles. These strategies which had mean scores above 2.55 are teaching the basic arithmetic involved in the use of tape measure before going into pattern drafting, taking drafting of pattern slowly step by step, use of play way method of teaching, teaching free hand cutting first, encouraging and enforcing the study of clothing and textiles in secondary schools,

practicing of straight sewing on pieces of fabric and use of visual aids in teaching the course. Due to the skill oriented nature of clothing and textiles, it is expedient that pattern drafting which is basic for adaptation and construction of garment should be well taught sequentially to enable the students grasp the nitty- gritty involved in drafting and construction of garment. Also, the teaching of free hand method of measuring and cutting can help both the students and teachers understand fully the different areas measured during pattern drafting. A road seamstress could be employed as a resource person in this aspect. The adherence to these strategies will in no less measure help both the students and teachers acquire the needed skills for being relevant in the labour market. Ochiagha, 1995) reiterated that one of the surest ways through which people find their way into the labour market is through skill acquisition in various trades. To do this, teachers should show high interest in the subject by being committed and using variety of methods that will captivate students' interest in the course because, the strength of educational system depends largely on the quality and commitments of its teachers.

Conclusion

The important role of clothing and textiles in providing opportunities for employment and or making its beneficiary self-reliant is not contestable. However, this course of study is bewildered with some challenges which make people to shy away from studying it. There are some strategies if adopted which will awaken the interests of students and teachers in the teaching of this course as well as sustain their interest. This will on the long run help the existence of the course for future benefits.

Recommendations

These recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Opportunity for professional development for home economics teachers in order to upgrade their pedagogical skills and sharpen their knowledge and skills in clothing and textiles.
2. There is need for the engagement of artisans in the area of clothing and textiles as resource person(s) to teach the use of free hand cutting and constructing of apparels.
3. Students should be taught reading of tape measure before teaching taking of body measurement in drafting.

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