

Relevance of SIWES to Business Education Programme Among Business Education Students in Universities in South-East in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study focused on the relevance of SIWES to Business Education programme among business education students in universities in South-east, Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consists of 320 business educators from state owned universities in South-east Nigeria. The study adopted a census sampling technique was employed as it studied the entire population of 320 business educator from of the study consisted state owned universities in South-east Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was researchers structured questionnaire titled: Relevance of SIWES Programme Question (RSIWESBEPQ). The instrument was subjected to a reliability test with a reliability index of 0.78 for data collection. Data collected study were analysed using arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested using t-test at a 0.05 level of significance. The results from the study revealed that SIWES is relevant in enabling students to develop skills in the utilisation of modern office machines, work safety skills and work ethics skills. It is based on this that the study recommended that industries and organisation of students industrial attachment should teach students effective ways of utilising modern office machines for employability after graduation, industries and organisation of students industrial attachment should teach students work safety skills for employability after graduation and that industries and organisation of students industrial attachment should teach students work ethics skills for employability after graduation

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Background to the Study

The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a skill training programme, designed to expose and prepare students of Universities, Monotechnic, polytechnics and colleges of agriculture to industrial work situation. Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) was introduced in 1973 by the Federal Military Government under the auspices and direct supervision of industrial Training fund (ITF). According to Ejike (2023) SIWES is the equivalent of cooperative education in the United States of America and in the United Kingdom. Azubuikwe (2024) opined that Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is equivalent to the internship (houseman-ship) of medical doctors, chamber attachment of legal practitioners and teaching practice of student teachers.

Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme is the accepted skills training programme designed to prepare students of tertiary institutions for their eventual transition from the school environment to the real world of work. In the same vein, Ejike (2023) explained that SIWES is a process of extending and enlarging the learning environment and resources beyond the immediate capabilities of the school. The author went further to state that it is effective methods of instruction which help the students not only to acquire occupationally oriented knowledge, skill and attitudes, but to have the opportunity also to apply these skills in the real world of work. It is therefore an effort to bridge the gap between theory and practice in our educational practice. One of the courses or educational programmes that has Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) as one its requirement is Business Education.

Business Education is an aspect of technical and vocational education programme that enables students to acquire knowledge, skills and appropriate attitude required for meaningful work experience. Imeokparia and Edidiagbonya (2014) expressed that business education is geared towards 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). Business education helps in inculcating employability skills among the recipients. Employable skills are those skills that the employers need for their organizational development. Edebeatu (2019) noted that employability skill is a group of essential abilities that involves the developments of knowledge base expertise level and mindset that are necessary for the success in modern work place. Employable skill is typically considered an essential qualification for many job positions and hence become necessary for an individual employment success of just about any level within a business environment. 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. Therefore, 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 Work Experience Scheme (SIWES).

Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is jointly co-ordinate by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), The National Universities Commission (NUC); National

Board for Technical Education (NBTE); National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) as well as the industries. The minimum duration for the SIWES should be six (6) months. The training programme is undertaken in the third year of a four-year degree programme. The specific objective of the Student's Industrial Work Experience Schemes was summarized by the Federal Government of Nigeria in its Gazette of April, 1978 as follows: to provide an avenue for students in the Nigerian universities, polytechnics and colleges of education to acquire industrial skill and experience in their course of study; to expose student of any discipline of study to learn and experience the knowledge, which they required in industry where these are not taught in the lecture room; to enable students to apply the knowledge taught in the lecture rooms in real industrial situation; to enable students to use the experience gained from the industrial training in discussion held in the lecture rooms; to enable students to get a feel of the work environment; to enable students to gain experience in writing report in any discipline of study works/project; to expose students to any field of study of its responsibilities and ethics; to expose students to employers as well as to introduce the Industrial Training programme available within Nigerian institutions. With all the experience and knowledge acquired it is hoped that student will be able to choose appropriate work after graduation. From the foregoing, the objectives of SIWES in no doubt was designed to expose and prepare students of Business Education for the industrial work situation in order to achieve technical and vocational skill through various firms, industries and factories and in any commercial establishment. It is expected that the students in SIWES will develop skills in the areas of operation of machines in the real work environment, workshop safety and effective working ethics.

In various industries and establishments where students of Business Education are attached during students industrial working experience scheme, machines and other tools are used, it is crystal clear that some of the tools and machined used include computers, photocopying machines, scanners among others. In this type of working environment, it is expected that students acquire basic skills in utilisation of Information and Communication Technologies (which is also known as ICT skills). Azubuike (2024) described ICT skills as the abilities related to using Information and Communication Technologies like computers, mobile devices, and the internet. They range from basic functions like sending emails and using a keyboard to advanced skills such as coding, data analysis, and cybersecurity. These skills are crucial for everyday tasks, communication, and a wide variety of job. Thus, one of the importance of SIWE is to help students of Business Education to develop ICT skills which will give them employability edge in financial institutions (banks, insurance companies, mortgage institutions and accounting firms)

Another advantage of engaging in Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme is to enable students of business education learn about workshop safety. Workshop safety is the practice of preventing harm, injuries, and accidents in a workshop by following rules. Ebeh (2023) stated that workshop safety refers to the proper using of equipment, maintaining good housekeeping, and understanding hazards associated

with tools, machines, and materials, ensuring a safe environment for everyone. In the context of this study, workshop safety involves using proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like goggles and gloves, maintaining clean and organized workspaces, regularly inspecting tools, ensuring good ventilation, and following strict rules like never operating machinery without training, keeping loose items away from moving parts, and being aware of emergency procedures to prevent accidents and injuries. Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme enables students learn required safeties in any working environment they find themselves after graduation.

Furthermore, Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme is very crucial in enabling students to learn effective working ethics. Work ethic is a set of values like diligence, integrity, and responsibility that guide a person's attitude and behavior toward work, emphasizing hard work, discipline, and commitment to quality, which builds character and drives professional success for individuals and teams. Ifeanyi (2019) defined work ethics as is a set of moral principles and values guiding professional behavior, emphasizing dedication, responsibility, and diligence in one's job, reflecting a belief in hard work as inherently valuable for character and success, and including traits like reliability, integrity, discipline, and commitment to quality. Effective working ethics enable students of Business education to know the does and don'ts of office environment.

However, despite the importance of Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme in improving students' employability skills, it appears that most students know the importance of industrial attachment and hence do not like engaging in SIWES programme. According to Okereke (2022) most students play truancy during their industrial attachment only to appear during their supervision day. This high level of truancy has led to lack of acquisition of practical skills among graduate's Business Education of tertiary institutions in Nigeria as a whole and in Ebonyi State university in particular. This situation has given rise to complaints, among parents and industries, that graduates of tertiary institutions are half-groomed, lack manipulative skills and not employable. The situation also gave rise to the question as to whether the SIWES is an effective platform for equipping business education students with the competencies and skills they so much require. It therefore becomes important to conduct an empirical study perceived relevance of SIWES to business education programme among Business Education students in Ebonyi State University

Statement of the Problem

Business Education graduates are expected to be experts in various offices and organisations they find themselves due to the skills and knowledge acquired during their academic training. However, the researcher's experiences revealed the opposite as Business Education graduates found in nowadays offices performs abysmally low in terms of delivery which ought to be their areas of exploits. The reasons behind this, is not far-fetched either the curriculum is deficient or the delivery is deficient or also the SIWES programmes isn't achieving its mandates which was acquisition of practical skills needed to operate in the modern-day office and its management.

This perceived loss of the primary objective of SIWES to make industries complement the schools' effort by allowing students have good practical work-experiences through the first use of certain facilities relevant to the student's area of studies which in most cases may not be provided by the schools creates a hug problem. Regrettably, very many students connive with their supervisors to abandon the programme and grades are awarded to the students, thereby jettisoning the lofty benefits the programme stands to offer. The above scenario is amplified by Azubuike (2023) who maintained that about 60% of Industrial Training students do not report to their place of attachment to fulfil all righteousness and that 30% attach themselves to organisations where their educational/course of study have no relevance, while the remaining 10% only get better place for their Industrial attachment. All these have a negative effect on the students' intellectual/occupational development of students after graduation and as well impedes the realisation of the objectives of SIWES in making Business Education students competent business and office managers. These disturbing situations has led to serious doubts about the importance of Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme on Business Education students, hence this study on the relevance of SIWES programme on Business Education students in Universities in South-east, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the relevant of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines among business education students in South-east, Nigeria?
2. What is the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria?
3. What is the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference between male and female business education students on the impact of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines in in South-east, Nigeria
2. There is no significant difference between male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety in South-east, Nigeria.
3. There is no significant difference between male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics in South-east, Nigeria

Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey research which involved gathering data through the use of questionnaire. The population and sample of the study consisted of 320 business educators from public colleges of education in south east Nigeria. The study

utilized a validated four-point scale questionnaire with a reliability index of 0.78 for data collection. The researchers with the help of two research assistants administered and collected copies of the instrument from the respondents. Data collected for the study were analysed using arithmetic mean and standard deviation. Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 and above was regarded as accepted while mean ratings less than 2.50 were regarded as not accepted. For the hypotheses, any item with t-calculated value greater than critical value was rejected, otherwise the hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted.

Research Question 1: What are the relevant of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines among business education students in South-east, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean responses on the relevant of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines among business education students in South-east, Nigeria

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remark
1	Skills in the use of advanced printers.	3.13	0.98	Agree
2	Scanners	3.34	0.80	Agree
3	Use of computer to send mails	3.06	1.07	Agree
4	Use of faxes in the office	3.51	0.73	Agree
5	Use of various computer systems,	3.01	0.82	Agree
6	Use of webinars for meeting	3.49	0.68	Agree
7	Use of intranet (LAN) to communicate with work environment	3.28	0.98	Agree
8	Use of close circuit television camera to monitor environment	3.33	0.67	Agree
9	Saving of documents	3.02	1.04	Agree
10	Creating of new folders	3.18	1.04	Agree
11	Copy documents on CD and flash drive	3.29	0.82	Agree
12	Manipulating graphics	3.53	0.64	Agree
13	Accessing Information online	2.86	0.83	Agree
14	Creating and managing websites	3.41	0.70	Agree
15	Developing skills in word processing	3.35	0.58	Agree

Table 1 showed the mean response of the relevance of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines among business education students in South-east, Nigeria. Results from the table revealed that item 1-15 were with the mean rating between 2.86-3.51 which were above 2.5 the criterion for acceptance. This means that all the items were the relevance of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines among business education students in South-east, Nigeria

Research Question 2: What is the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean responses of the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remark
16	safety precautions in handling computers accessories	3.16	0.70	Agree
17	discovering faulty office equipment	3.23	0.69	Agree
18	safety precautions in handling hard copies of office files	3.11	0.83	Agree
19	safety precautions in handling digital files	2.94	0.95	Agree
20	safety precautions in handling official books of account	3.40	0.84	Agree
21	safety precautions in handling e-mails	3.07	0.90	Agree
22	Effective book keeping practice	3.20	0.93	Agree
23	Preservation of files against termites and rodents	3.43	0.80	Agree
24	spot potential hazards, such as cluttered walkways,	3.14	1.10	Agree
25	Identify poor lighting, or unclosed drawers			

Table 2 showed the mean responses of the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria. Results from the table revealed that items 16-25 were with mean rating above 2.5 the benchmark for acceptance. The result from the study revealed that SIWES programme is relevant in the development work safety skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria.

Research Question 3: What is the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean rating of the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria

S/N	SIWES training helps business education student in	X	SD	Remark
26	maintaining professionalism skills in the office	3.49	0.68	HE
27	Developing office collaborative skills	3.28	0.98	HE
28	Developing office accountability skills	3.33	0.67	HE
29	Developing office adaptability skills	3.02	1.04	HE
30	Developing office integrity and honesty skill	3.18	1.04	HE
31	Developing office communication skills	3.40	0.84	Agree
31	Developing office punctuality skills	3.29	0.82	HE

Results from table 3 showed the mean rating of the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between male and female business education students on the impact of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines in in South-east, Nigeria

Table 4: t-test summary of the difference between male and female business education students on the impact of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines in in South-east, Nigeria

Siting of residence	N	Mean	Std. D	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Female	131	3.261	.3660				
Male	189	3.248	.3774	318	.195	.659	Not Significant

Table 4 shows no significant difference in the mean ratings difference between male and female business education students on the impact of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines in in South-east, Nigeria as the t-cal is .195 and the p-value (.659) is greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education students on the impact of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines in in South-east, Nigeria.

Hypothesis II

There is no significant difference between male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety in South-east, Nigeria.

Table 5: t-test summary of the difference between male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety in South-east, Nigeria

Siting of residence	N	Mean	Std. D	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Female	131	3.186	.353				
Male	189	3.186	.354	318	.100	.752	Not Significant

Table 5 shows no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety in South-east, Nigeria as the t-cal is .100 and the p-value (.752) is greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety in South-east, Nigeria.

Hypothesis III

There is no significant difference between male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics in South-east, Nigeria

Table 6: t-test summary of the difference between male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics in South-east, Nigeria

Siting of residence	N	Mean	Std. D	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Female	131	3.213	.332				
Male	189	3.214	.345	318	.176	.614	Not Significant

Table 6 shows no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics in South-east, Nigeria as the t-cal is .176 and the p-value (.614) is greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics in South-east, Nigeria

Discussion

Table 1 showed the mean responses on the relevant of SIWES on the skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines among business education students in South-east, Nigeria. Results from the table revealed that the respondents agreed that SIWES enable students to develop skill in the use of advanced printers. Printers are hardware devices that create durable physical copies (hard copies) of digital text and graphics, usually on paper, using technologies like inkjet (sprays ink) or laser (uses toner powder), with common types including personal inkjet, laser, all-in-one (print, scan, copy), photo, and advanced 3D printers that build physical objects layer by layer from digital files. Printers are today used in various offices today. Students on industrial attachment are often exposed to the use of printers for the production of digital documents to hard copies (Ebeh, 2019). Offor (2022) also reported that business education students on industrial attachment are usually exposed to the use of modern office equipment such as printer to office routine duties.

The result from the table also indicated that the respondents agreed that SIWES is relevant to students as it helps them to develop skill in the utilisation scanners, computer to send mails, faxes in the office, various computer systems, webinars for meeting and intranet (LAN) to communicate with work environment. These results are in accordance Etim and Okoro (2023) who noted that SIWES expose students to the use of modern office communication systems such as fax, inter com among others. The result from the study further revealed that the respondents agreed that SIWES enable students to develop skills in the use of close circuit television camera to monitor environment. This result is in line with Abraham-Ibe (2015) who noted that students on industrial attachment are usually exposed to the use of smart home tools for security purpose around the offices.

Furthermore, the result from the study showed that the respondents agreed that SIWES enable students to develop skills in saving of documents, create of new folders, copy documents on CD and flash drive, manipulate graphics, accessing Information online, creating and manage websites and Developing skills in word processing. These results are in line with Mba (2025) who noted that industrial attachment is relevant to business education students as it enables them to develop skills in the use of ICT tools in creating and saving documents.

The table further revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education students on the impact of SIWES on the skill development in the utilization of modern office machines in in South-east, Nigeria. This implies that both male and female business education students agreed that SIWES is relevant to students in their skill development in the utilisation of modern office machines among business education students in South-east, Nigeria.

Table 2 showed the mean responses of the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria. Work safety skills involve practical abilities like using PPE correctly, operating machinery safely, and knowing emergency procedures (First Aid, fire safety), combined with critical thinking skills such as risk assessment, hazard identification, clear communication, and attention to detail to proactively maintain a secure environment for everyone. Results from the table revealed that the respondents agreed that SIWES enable students to learn safety precautions in handling computers accessories. This result is in accordance with Edeh and Edu (2016) who reported that SIWES enable students to develop skills in the principles of using computer system in an office. The result from the table also indicated that the respondents agreed that SIWES enable students to develop skills in discovering faulty office equipment, safety precaution skills in handling hard copies of office files, digital files and official books of account. These results are in line with Eke and Iheanyi (2016) who reported that students on industrial attachment are exposed skills in handling official document. Furthermore, the result from the table revealed that SIWES programme enable students to develop safety precaution skills in handling e-mails, effective book keeping practice, preservation of files against termites and rodents, spotting potential hazards, such as cluttered walkways and identifying poor lighting, or unclosed drawers. These results were supported by hypothesis 2 which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work safety in South-east, Nigeria. This implies that SIWES is very crucial in enabling students to gain work safety skills in in South-east, Nigeria.

Table 3 shows the mean rating of the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics skills among business education students in South-east, Nigeria. Result from the table indicated that the respondents agreed that SIWES enables them to develop skills in maintaining professionalism skills in the office, developing office collaborative skills, developing office accountability skills, developing office adaptability skills, developing

office integrity and honesty skill, developing office communication skills, developing office punctuality skills. These skills are essential for employability among business education graduates. These results are line with Izuchukwu and Dike (2022) who reported that SIWES enable students in developing employability skills in work ethics and office management skills. The result from the table is supported by hypothesis 3 who reported that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings male and female business education on the relevance of SIWES programme on development on work ethics in South-east, Nigeria. This implies that SIWES is relevant in helping students to develop work ethics skills for employability.

Conclusion

SIWES is the accepted training programme in Nigeria designed as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical skill acquisition which is aimed at equipping students of higher institutions with saleable skills that will enable them enter and prosper in the real world of work. SIWES is a process of extending and enlarging the learning environment and resources beyond the immediate capabilities of the school. SIWES is effective method of instruction which help the students to have the opportunity and also to apply these skills in the real world of work. It is therefore an effort to bridge the gap between theory and practice in our educational system and real work practice. This means that SIWES programme is very crucial for business education students.

Recommendations

From the data collected and analysed the following recommendations are made

1. Industries and organisation of students' industrial attachment should teach students effective ways of utilising modern office machines for employability after graduation
2. Industries and organisation of students' industrial attachment should teach students work safety skills for employability after graduation
3. Industries and organisation of students' industrial attachment should teach students work ethics skills for employability after graduation

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