



Assessment of Skills Acquired through Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme among Science and Technical College Students in Benue State, Nigeria.

Isaac I. Hime^{1*} <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6730-1197> Joseph S. Nule² <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3662-2258> Sabastine L. Nor³ <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6626-0347> Emmanuel F. Upwa⁴ <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8028-1239>

^{1,2,3 & 4} Department of Industrial Technology, Benue State University, Makurdi

*Corresponding Author Email: himeisaac@gmail.com

Abstract

The study assessed the skills acquired through the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) among science and technical college students in Benue State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to find out the technical, entrepreneurial, and employability skills students acquired through SIWES. The study was guided by three research questions. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 432 final-year students and 326 trade teachers of science and technical colleges in Benue State in the 2022/2023 academic session. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Skill Acquired through SIWES Questionnaire (SA-SIWES-Q). Data collected were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions. The study found that Science and Technical College students acquired technical skills like skills for estimating the cost of work; skills for handling and using tools; and skills for selecting the right material for the right job among others. It was also found that through SIWES students acquire entrepreneurial skills such as innovative skills, planning skills, creativity skills, economic skills, skills for managing business firms, and financial management skills among others. The finding also revealed that SIWES enables students to acquire employability skills such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, skills for working under pressure, organizing skills, and interpersonal skills among others. The researchers recommended that SIWES be introduced in the curriculum of all educational programs that offer technical and science skills and that strict supervision be conducted.

Keywords: Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), Practical Skills, Entrepreneurial Skills, Employability Skills.

1.0 Introduction

The growing demand for well-trained craftsmen by industries and the need to produce technical and vocational education graduates with skills who can be employers of labor and also add to the development of a nation have made the Federal Government of Nigeria introduce the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Science and Technical Education program in Nigeria to ensure the quality of technical vocational education and training. The concept of technical education is used as an all-embracing term in the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014). Technical education equips people with a broad range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are now recognized as indispensable for meaningful participation in work and life. Similarly, Tiough and Nor (2018) stated that technical education has an important role in economic and industrial growth, employment generation, and poverty alleviation. Tiough and Nor (2018) further stated that students should therefore be trained with up-to-date to fit into the industrial and global market.

The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a Skills Training Programme designed to prepare and expose Students of Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Technology, Colleges of Agriculture, and Colleges of Education to the Industrial Work situation they are likely to meet after graduation (Industrial Training Fund, 2025). The Scheme affords students the opportunity of familiarizing and exposing themselves to handling equipment and machinery that are usually not available in their Institutions. Before the establishment of the Scheme, there was a growing concern that graduates of our Institutions of higher learning lacked adequate practical knowledge and that the theoretical education in higher institutions was not responsive to the needs of the employers of labor (Madu, Omonijo, Anyaegbunam, Adeleke, Nnatu, Ejoh, Oluwunmi, Olowookere & Agubo, 2023). It was against this background that the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) initiated, designed, and introduced the SIWES Scheme in 1973 to acquaint students with the skills of handling industrial equipment and machinery. Another justification for the introduction of SIWES according to Njoku (2014) is the global competitiveness in the industry and the need to produce graduates of TVET who have the skills needed in the industries in Nigeria and the world at large.

According to ITF (2024), the objectives of SIWES were majorly to provide an avenue for students in institutions of higher learning to acquire industrial skills

and experience in their course of study; prepare students for the industrial work situation they are to meet after graduation; expose Students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in their Institutions; make the transition from school to the world of work easier, and enhance Students contacts for later job placement; provide Students with an opportunity to apply their knowledge in real work situation thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice and enlist and strengthen employers involvement in the entire education process and prepare Students for employment after graduation.

SIWES is a new approach to the old-time industrial attachment (IT) aimed at fully exposing students to machines, equipment, professional work methods, safety practice skills, and good industrial relations. As an industrial attachment process, SIWES extends and enlarges the learning environment and resources beyond the capabilities of the school thereby enlarging the scope and quality of practical skills that students can acquire (Tiough and Nor, 2018). It helps technical students to acquire occupationally oriented knowledge, skills, and work attitudes with immediate opportunities to apply them in the real world of work. The cooperative nature of SIWES between schools and industries enhances testing the practicability of every theory learned in school right in the industry thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice with the acquisition of specialized industrial skills (Tambuwal, 2012). Thus, SIWES connects the school with practical work experiences through which they acquire skills.

SIWES is a practical application of experiential learning theories, where students learn by doing. Experiential learning is a constructivist learning theory defined as 'learning by doing'. David Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory defines experiential learning as a four-stage process that includes concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Concrete learning occurs when a learner has a new experience or interprets a previous experience in a new way. For example, a building construction student has to learn a new procedure as part of their building education. Reflective observation is when the learner reflects on the new experience to understand what it means. In our example, the building construction student might think about how they could have done the procedure better. Abstract conceptualization is when the learner adapts their thinking or constructs new ideas based on experience and reflection. For example, the building construction student realizes he needs to have all their materials ready before starting the procedure. Active experimentation occurs when the learner applies their new ideas to real-world situations to test whether they work and see if any changes need to be made. This process can happen quickly or over an extended time. This

approach is more effective in skills acquisition than solely relying on theoretical instruction.

Umar (2010) defined skill as well well-established habit of doing something involving the acquisition of performance capabilities in the most economical way. Skill is a specialized and well-rehearsed method or technique of carrying out a function/task that could be repeated with predictable quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. Skill acquisition is very important in the life of every human being. Skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function and become an expert in it (Maigida, Saba & Namkere, 2018). The major cause of unemployment among the vibrant youths in our society today is mainly due to the lack of technical skills coupled with entrepreneurial skills to back up what they learned from their various institutions of learning. Perhaps, Technical Education can help young people get the jobs on which their future and those yet unborn depend. This can be achieved through entrepreneurship enlightenment among students during SIWES.

Skill is thought of as a quality of performance that does not depend solely upon a person's fundamental, innate capacities but must be developed through training, practice, and experience. Skills represent particular ways of using capacities in relation to environmental demands. Adeyemo (2009) reiterates that a learner of a new skill does not jump into operation without first receiving the necessary verbal instruction. The instruction, perhaps given in bits, units, modules, or stages, according to him, must be fused to form a skillful/skilled performance. It is, however, pathetic that the education being received by Nigerian Science and Technical College students today is nothing more than only verbal instructions without any practical orientations to actualize what is instructed. This has made the introduction of SIWES necessary in the curriculum of Technical Education for the acquisition of technical, entrepreneurship, and employability.

Technical skills refer to the knowledge and expertise needed to accomplish complex actions, tasks, and processes relating to computational and physical technology as well as a diverse group of other enterprises. In line with this, Idoko (2014) explained that the acquisition of practical skills involves the development of new skills, practice, and ways of doing things or performing a task, usually gained through training or experience. Those who possess technical skills are often referred to as "technicians", with the expression referring to audio technicians, electronics technicians, market technicians, computer technicians, engineering technicians, and a variety of other designations. Technical skills can refer to the ability to perform tasks that require the use of certain tools, whether tangible or intangible, and the technology required to master their intended uses in a variety of scenarios. In this regard, knowledge in a technical skills capacity is seen as practical because it allows an individual to

complete a designated task in a real-world, not theoretical, manner. Given the growth of technology within worldwide and local economies, the need for diverse technical skills is likely to continue to grow into the foreseeable future which could result in entrepreneurship.

According to Araba (2018), entrepreneurship is important as a diffusion mechanism to transform scientific inventions into new product and service innovations. Consequently, Adebisi (2015) opined that vocational and technical education institutions should offer a chance to develop knowledge-intensive high-growth enterprises for all students. Araba (2018) emphasizes that it is important to involve stakeholders inside and outside of educational institutions in entrepreneurial skill training. One of the benefits of SIWES to science and technical college students is the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills which enable them to start up their business enterprise using the technical skills which they acquired.

Employability Skills, on the other hand, can be defined as the transferable skills needed by an individual to make them employable. Along with good technical understanding and subject knowledge, employers often outline a set of skills that they want from an employee. These skills are what they believe will equip the employee to carry out their role to the best of their ability. Employability depends on your knowledge, skills, and attitudes, how you use those assets, and how you present them to employers. These skills are best acquired by Technical college students through SIWES where they are exposed to real work situations.

Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment is one of the fundamental contemporary developmental challenges facing Nigeria. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023) estimated that over sixty percent (60%) of Nigeria's population is under 30 years old and that about 33 percent of that youthful population is unemployed. It is more worrisome that many of these unemployed youth are graduates of Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. The number of Technical College graduates seen roaming the streets in search of white-collar jobs is saddening, rendering some of these young graduates frustrated and thereby getting them involved in anti-social vices such as armed robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, drug trafficking, political thuggery in a bid to survive.

These young Technical College graduates find it difficult to get jobs or become self-reliant because of a deficiency in the skills required for a specific job or venture (Nduononwi, 2016). Furthermore, the National Bureau of Statistics (2024) stated that the unemployment rate for Q1 2024 was 5.3 percent, showing an increase from 5.0 percent recorded in Q3 2023. Embedded in the National Bureau of Statistics

(2024) report is the disturbing information that unemployment is rising among graduates. Data from the World Bank showed that unemployed Nigerians with advanced education hit 13.69 percent in 2016, and 15.3 percent in 2019 respectively. Similarly, an earlier submission by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2016 showed that 52 million new graduates within the economically active population of Nigeria have no job and, hence are unemployed. The high rate of unemployment among graduates of Technical colleges is a result of a lack of skill acquisition and also a mismatch of skills from what is happening in the industry and the school has given policymakers a source of concern. This growing impression informs a compelling need to evaluate the impact of SIWES on Science and Technical College students' skill acquisition.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to find out the skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES. Specifically, the study seeks to find out:

1. The technical skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES.
2. The entrepreneurial skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES.
3. The employability skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES.

Research Questions

1. What are the technical skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES?
2. What are the entrepreneurship skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES?
3. What are the employability skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES?

2.0 Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised 432 final-year students in, the 2018/2019 academic session and 326 trade teachers in science and technical colleges in the Benue State (Benue State Science and Technical Education Board, 2018). There was no sample because the entire population was taken since it was of a manageable size and accessible to the researchers. The instrument for data collection was Skill Acquired through the SIWES Questionnaire (SA-SIWES-Q). The questionnaire was divided into three sections (sections A, B, and C) according to the variables and objectives. Section A contains questionnaire items for technical skills such as skills for estimating the cost of work, skills for handling and using tools, and skills for selecting the right materials for the right job among others. Section B contains

questionnaire items on entrepreneurship skills such as innovative skills, planning skills, creativity skills, and economic skills among others. The response options of the questionnaire are indexed on a four-point rating scale of Very Highly Acquired (VHA), Highly Acquired (HA), Low Acquired (LA), and Very Low acquired (VLA). The scale was that VHA was scored four (4), HA was scored three (3), low acquired was scored two (2), and very low acquired was scored one (1). The content validity of the instruments was carried out by three experts. The experts were requested to validate the instrument based on content, relevance, and clarity of language. Each expert was requested in writing to specifically validate and make suggestions or corrections where necessary. To guide the experts, the instruments were attached with objectives, research questions, and hypotheses for the study. One of the experts made suggestions that led to the restructuring of the original research objectives. The experts also made minor corrections on the items of the instruments. The corrections were effected accordingly. All the questionnaire items were retained by the three experts. The remarks of the three experts show that the instrument was valid for the study. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was used to estimate the reliability coefficients of the instrument which was found to be 0.87.

The researcher visited all the Technical and Science Colleges involved in the study and obtained permission and participant consent from the principals of the schools for the students to participate in the study. Three research assistants were briefed to assist the researcher in administering copies of the questionnaire. The face-to-face method was used in the distribution of 758 copies of the questionnaire. To avoid missing copies of the questionnaire, the questionnaires were given to the respondents and collected by the research assistants on the same day. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality and privacy of the information they provided. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The decision rule was that any item (skill) with a mean response of 2.50 and above was considered as acquired while any item below 2.50 was regarded as not acquired.

3.0 Results and Discussions

3.1 Results and Data Analysis

Research Question One: What are the technical skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES?

Table 1

Mean and standard deviation of Science and Technical college teachers and students on the technical skills acquired through SIWES

| S/N | Technical Skills Acquired through SIWES | M | SD | Remark |
|-----|---|------|------|--------------|
| 1 | Skills for estimating the cost of work. | 2.21 | 0.57 | Not Acquired |

| | | | | |
|----|---|-------------|------|-----------------|
| 2 | Skills for handling and using tools | 3.26 | 0.72 | Acquired |
| 3 | Skills for selecting the right material for the right job | 2.91 | 0.49 | Acquired |
| 4 | Skills for taking measurements | 2.78 | 0.93 | Acquired |
| 5 | Skill for maintaining safety at the workplace | 2.60 | 0.63 | Acquired |
| 6 | Tools and Equipment maintenance skills | 2.53 | 0.60 | Acquired |
| 7 | Skills for project planning | 2.65 | 0.75 | Acquired |
| 8 | Skills for drafting | 1.22 | 0.79 | Not Acquired |
| 9 | Skills for material handing | 2.82 | 0.58 | Acquired |
| 10 | Skills for project management | 2.55 | 0.74 | Acquired |
| | Cluster Mean | 2.55 | | Acquired |

The result data presented in Table 1 shows that Science and Technical College students acquire technical skills through Industrial Training. Respondents think that the technical skills acquired through SIWES include skills for handling and using tools; skills for selecting the right material for the right job; skills for taking measurements; skills for material handling, skills for maintaining safety at the workplace, skills for project planning, tools and equipment maintenance skills and Skills for project management. However, the result in Table one shows that students did not acquire skills for estimating the cost of work and skills for drafting during SIWES.

Research Question Two: What are the entrepreneurial skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES?

Table 2

Mean and standard deviation of Science and Technical college teachers and students on the entrepreneurial skills acquired through Industrial SIWES

| S/ N | Entrepreneurial Skills Acquired through SIWES | M | SD | Remark |
|---------|---|-------------|------|-----------------|
| 1 | Innovative skills | 3.32 | 0.75 | Acquired |
| 2 | Planning skills | 2.74 | 0.73 | Acquired |
| 3 | Creativity skills | 2.91 | 0.78 | Acquired |
| 4 | Economic skills | 2.82 | 0.50 | Acquired |
| 5 | Skill for managing business firms | 3.11 | 1.03 | Acquired |
| 6 | Skills for financial management | 3.10 | 0.92 | Acquired |
| 7 | Skills for identifying business ideas | 3.89 | 0.42 | Acquired |
| 8 | Skills for evaluating business progress | 2.73 | 0.64 | Acquired |
| 9 | Skills for managing business failure | 2.51 | 0.52 | Acquired |
| 10 | Skills for raising funds to start a business | 2.88 | 0.92 | Acquired |
| | Cluster Mean | 3.00 | | Acquired |

The result of the data analysis presented in Table 2 shows that Science and Technical College students acquired entrepreneurial skills through SIWES. Some of the entrepreneurial skills that are acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES include innovative skills, planning skills, creativity skills, economic skills, skills for managing business firms, skills for financial management, Skills for identifying business ideas, skills for evaluating business progress, skills for managing business failure and skills for raising funds to start a business.

Research Question Three: What are the employability skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES?

Table 3

Mean and standard deviation of Science and Technical college teachers and students on the employability skills acquired through SIWES.

| S/ N | Employability Skills Acquired through SIWES | M | SD | Remark |
|---------|--|------|------|-----------------|
| 1 | Communication skills: The ability to explain what you mean clearly and concisely through written and spoken means. | 2.91 | 0.75 | Acquired |
| 2 | Problem-solving skills: The ability to understand a problem by identifying the key issues, and implications and identifying solutions. | 3.72 | 0.73 | Acquired |
| 3 | Skills for Working under pressure: Handling stress and ensuring that you meet up with it. | 2.55 | 0.78 | Acquired |
| 4 | Organizing skills: Being able to plan work to meet deadlines and targets. | 3.85 | 0.50 | Acquired |
| 5 | Team working: Working well with other people from different disciplines and backgrounds to accomplish a task or goal. | 2.90 | 1.03 | Acquired |
| 6 | Team working Negotiation skills: To take on board other people's feelings and express your requirements to achieve a goal. | 2.73 | 0.92 | Acquired |
| 7 | Numeracy skills: The ability to use data and mathematics to support evidence or demonstrate a point. | 1.97 | 0.42 | Not Acquired |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---|-------------|------|-----------------|
| 8 | Interpersonal skills: The ability to listen and relate to other people. | 2.81 | 0.64 | Acquired |
| 9 | Ability to learn and adapt to changes. | 3.00 | 0.52 | Acquired |
| 10 | Ability to know the value of diversity and what it can bring. | 2.44 | 0.92 | Not Acquired |
| Cluster Mean | | 2.88 | | Acquired |

The result of the data analysis presented in Table 3 shows that Science and Technical College students acquired employability skills through SIWES. The result in Table 3 shows that the employability skills acquired by students through SIWES include communication skills, problem-solving skills, skills for working under pressure, organizing skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork skills, and negotiation skills. Respondents however disagree that students do not acquire numeracy skills and the ability to know the value of diversity through SIWES.

3.2 Discussion of Findings

Results on technical skills show that Science and Technical College students acquire technical skills through SIWES. The finding revealed that the technical skills acquired through SIWES include skills for estimating the cost of work; skills for handling and using tools; Skills for selecting the right material for the right job; skills for taking measurements; and skills for material handling among others. This finding is in agreement with that of Ojokuku et al. (2015) who found that SIWES bridges the existing gap between theory and practice and exposes students to necessary skills for smooth transition from the classroom to the world of work. Ojokuku et al (2015) also found that through SIWES students acquired technical skills and experience for professional development. The finding is also in line with Idoko's (2014) assertion that the acquisition of practical skills involves the development of new skills, practice, and ways of doing things or performing a task, usually gained through training or experiences that are offered through SIWES. The finding on technical skills further revealed that skills such as skills for estimating the cost of work and skills for drafting were not acquired by students during SIWES. These skills may not be acquired by students during SIWES because in most cases the estimate for the cost of work and drafting are carried out by the senior officers of companies or organizations and students undergoing SIWES are not given opportunities to carry out an estimation of cost or drafting.

Results on entrepreneurial skills show that Science and Technical College students acquire entrepreneurial skills through SIWES. Some of the entrepreneurial skills

that are acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES include innovative skills, planning skills, creativity skills, economic skills, skills for managing business firms, skills for financial management, skills for identifying business ideas, skills for evaluating business progress, skills for managing business failure and skills for raising funds to start a business. This finding is in agreement with that of Araba (2018) who found that SIWES provides students with opportunities to develop and put into practice entrepreneurship skills which are necessary to add value to the skills and knowledge they acquired in school. Consequently, Adebisi (2015) opined that vocational and technical education institutions should offer the chance to develop knowledge-intensive high-growth enterprises for all students. Araba (2018) further emphasizes that it is important to involve stakeholders inside and outside of educational institutions in entrepreneurial skill training.

Results on employability skills show that Science and Technical College students acquire employability skills through SIWES. According to respondents, the employability skills acquired by Science and Technical College students through SIWES include communication skills, problem-solving skills, skills for working under pressure, organizing skills, and interpersonal skills among others. Respondents however disagree that Science and Technical college students do not acquire numeracy skills through SIWES. Respondents also disagreed that Science and Technical college students do not acquire the ability to know the value of diversity and what it can bring through SIWES. According to Adebisi (2015), employability Skills are the transferable skills needed by an individual to make them employable. Along with good technical understanding and subject knowledge, employers often outline a set of skills that they want from an employee. These skills are what they believe will equip the employee to carry out their role to the best of their ability. Employability depends on your knowledge, skills, and attitudes, how you use those assets, and how you present them to employers. These skills are best acquired by Technical college students through SIWES where they are exposed to real work situations (Adebisi, 2015). The finding on employability skills further shows that students do not acquire numeracy skills and the ability to know the value of diversity through SIWES. This could be because students undergoing SIWES are not exposed to highly demanding jobs that provide them with opportunities for acquiring numeracy and diversity skills.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, we concluded that Science and Technical College students acquired technical, entrepreneurial, and employability skills through SIWES. Through participation in SIWES science and technical students

can acquire practical technical skills which are used in carrying out tasks in their various professions. SIWES also enables students to acquire entrepreneurship skills which are necessary for them to start and manage their business enterprise.

4.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. During SIWES students should be deliberately exposed to experiences or activities requiring estimation of the cost of work to enable them to acquire the skills for estimating the cost of work.
2. Efforts should be made through collaboration with numeracy-based firms or digital drafting software tutorials to develop content that students undergoing SIWES can use to enable them to develop numeracy and drafting skills.
3. The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme should be introduced in the curriculum of all educational programmes that offer technical skills such as the new senior secondary school curriculum. This will enable students to acquire employability skills thereby increasing their chances of employment.

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