

**INFLUENCE OF INDUSTRIAL WORK EXPERIENCE SCHEME (SIWES) IN DEVELOPING  
EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN BENSON IDAHOSA  
UNIVERSITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the influence of students' industrial works experience in developing employability skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. To guide the study, two research questions were raised and their corresponding hypotheses were formulated. The study employed correlational survey research design and the population of the study comprised all final year students in the two campuses of Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. The study employed a correlational survey research design and the population for this study consisted of six hundred and seventy-seven (677) final year undergraduate students in the Departments of Education, Accounting, Mass Communication, Nursing Science and Medical Laboratory Science and 15% of the entire population which is 96 final year students were used as the sample for the study. The instrument for data collection used in this study was a forty*

*item instrument titled “Influence of Students’ Industrial Works Experience Scheme in Developing Employability Skills among Undergraduate Students Questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts and after being subjected to reliability procedures using the Cronbach Alpha reliability statistics, yielded 0.76. The instrument was administered to the sampled students and the findings obtained showed that there is a significant influence of students’ industrial works experience on the acquisition of communication skills, and computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation was made that school authorities, especially, Benson Idahosa University, should emphasize on the importance of exposing students to SIWES as this study has showed clearly that SIWES facilitates the necessary skills for employability after graduation.*

***Key words: SIWES, Employability skills, Communication skills, computer literacy skills, Undergraduates***

## **Introduction**

With the increasing rate of unemployment, underemployment, poverty, coupled with the incidence of student's dropout in schools, the inquiry has to be made to ascertain if skilled-based education programmes are capable of relieving Nigeria from these disturbingly social problems. One of the skilled-oriented education programmes that may help in addressing these social problems is known as Students' Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES). This underscores the significance of effectively incorporating industrial works experience, as it plays a pivotal role in preparing undergraduates including education students with the skills essential for employability post-graduation. The Nigerian government, in collaboration with the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), introduced the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) into the university curriculum. The primary goal of SIWES is to equip undergraduates with the requisite skills, ensuring they are well-prepared for employment opportunities upon graduation. Students who do not participate in the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) not only miss out on practical skills that complement theoretical knowledge but also forego crucial employability skills. These skills, including communication, adaptability, computer literacy, teamwork, and interpersonal skills, are essential for manipulating machinery and equipment. Additionally, the chance to work in a reputable company, where students can interact and learn from experts in their field of study, is lost.

On the other hand, employability skills constitute the essential building blocks for career development, a deficiency observed in recent graduates, including those already employed (Gainer, 2020). Employable skills encompass personal attributes such as image, attitude, habits, behavior, communication techniques, and problem-solving abilities that cut across organizational processes. Robinson (2020)

emphasizes that employability skills comprise the attributes, behaviors, and skills necessary for individuals to effectively enter, manage, and sustain employment in the world of work. In the ever-changing global economic environment, graduates require skills, capabilities, and attribute that foster success. Employers increasingly expect graduates to be innovative, adaptable, resilient, and flexible, possessing an enterprising mindset. These skills include both hard (technical) and discipline-specific skills and generic or soft skills, such as communication, creativity, innovation, enterprise, professionalism, planning, organizing, problem-solving, intellectual competence, teamwork, and the use of tools and technology. It is crucial to note that not only hard skills are necessary, but soft or generic skills are also vital to ensure the employability of graduates.

Communication skills encompass the ability to effectively communicate with superiors, colleagues, and staff, involving attributes like listening, friendliness, confidence, respect, and feedback. Effective communication is integral to any organization, as its absence may lead to organizational downfall. Communication serves as the language of business and is the lifeblood of all organizations. Computer literacy skills denote the ability to function independently with a computer, including problem-solving, adapting to new situations, organizing information, and effective communication with other computer-literate individuals. In today's digital age, computer literacy is indispensable for effective work performance. Computer literacy encompasses the knowledge and proficiency in using computer software, applications, and digital tools for various tasks. In today's digital age, proficiency in computer literacy is essential for virtually every job role across industries.

The dynamic nature of the labour market is marked by the emergence of new sectors, demanding a higher level of both soft and hard skills, along with a

proactive attitude from potential employees. Employers in today's landscape seek individuals who can leverage their skills, competencies, creativity, and ingenuity to bring tangible value to their organizations promptly. Consequently, a significant number of graduates face challenges in securing employment due to a lack of acquired employable skills.

Empirical studies by Titilayo (2016), Titilayo and Mohammed (2016), Edokpolor and Egbri (2017), Gainer, (2020) and Robinson (2020) indicate that students undertaking SIWES programmes may sometimes acquire skills that do not align with the needs of potential employers, potentially resulting from inappropriate placements during their SIWES experiences. This mismatch between acquired skills and employer demands contributes to the rising unemployment rate in Nigeria. Despite the efforts of education stakeholders to address this issue, there has been minimal success in reversing the trend. Even undergraduates, who are expected to possess self-reliance skills, often struggle to acquire the necessary employable skills. As a response to these challenges, this research aims to investigate the influence of students' industrial works experience in developing employability skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City.

## **Literature Review**

### **Student industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES)**

Student industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) is a skill development program designed to expose and prepare students for real work in which they are likely to meet in their various discipline after graduation from school. The scheme was introduced in Nigeria by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1973, to bridge the gap between theory and practice of Engineering and Technology in Nigeria tertiary institutions of higher learning. This is to say that, SIWES was introduced to enable

Nigeria students in the tertiary institutions of higher learning, to match their theoretical school knowledge with the practical aspect of their training in the industry. Usman and Tasmin (2023) states that SIWES is designed to help and consolidate school/industry collaboration of undergraduate students undergoing courses in Science, Engineering and Technology and other professional courses to acquire necessary practical skills in addition to theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom. It is a program that uses the work environment to expose students to work methods and provide needed experience in handling tools, machinery and equipment that may not be available in educational institutions.

SIWES is a training programme that provides students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge to real life work situation thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice (Agwunan, 2022). Gill and Lashine (2023) identify the general skills student acquire through SIWES to include working in teams; presenting orally and problem-solving skills; communication and time management; better self-confidence and better self-motivation; flexibility and willingness to handle a wide range of tasks; ability to handle change; continual learning and entrepreneurial attitude; computing skills and knowledge of current information systems, and information delivery mechanisms among others. Similarly, Abraham-Ibe (2023) observed that through SIWES students have the opportunity to develop the much needed skills such as teams work skills; problem-solving skills; communication and time management skill among others while pursuing their academic qualifications in the universities. The students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) has been in existence for over 35years with the collaborative effort of tertiary institutions and other agencies/organizations that accredit the activities of tertiary institutions such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National

Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and Industrial Training Fund (ITF) which is the fund disbursement unit (Eneje, 2022).

The students that participate in this program include those studying engineering, vocational, technological and other related science courses in institutions of higher learning. SIWES forms part of the approved minimum academic standards in these institutions and it is also a core academic requirement carrying four credit units, which must be met by the students before graduation (Ahmed in Abraham-Ibe, 2023). 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. It helps students to acquire occupationally oriented knowledge, skills and work-attitudes with immediate opportunity to apply them in real world of work (Ogbu, 2023).

The major objectives of establishing the scheme as published in Industrial Training Fund (ITF) includes:

1. To expose and prepare students to method in handling equipment and tools that may not be available in educational institution.
2. To expose the instructors/ lectures to new developments in industrial sectors.
3. To promote cordial relationship between institution and industrial sectors.
4. To involve employer of labour in the entire educational process of preparing students as future employers.
5. To expose and prepare students in vocational technical and science related course for the industrial work situation they are likely to meet after graduation.
6. To bridge the gap between theoretical learning in the class and practical experiences in the field.
7. To prepare students for a business career by merging their analytical power with the practical skills for self-reliance (Industrial Training Fund 2013).

## **Concept of Employability Skills**

Employability skills are the foundation of career building blocks which are lacking in fresh graduates including those already employed (Gainer 2022). According to Osuala (2020), employable skills focus on personal image, attitude, habit, and behaviour, technique of communication, problem solving and decision making that cut across organizational processes. Robinson (2020) asserted that employability skills encompasses those attributes, behaviour and skills that are necessary for individual to effectively enter, manage and sustain employment in the world of work.

Employability relates to personal attributes rather than technical skills (Okolocha, 2020). Shafie and Nayan (2020) defined employability skills as job readiness skills. Employability skills are classified as technical and non-technical skills. Keller, Parker and Chan (2021) stated that employability skills are classification of attributes and skills, in which attributes speak to non-skill related behaviours and attitudes, while skills refer to the ability to carry out a technical task. Employability is the possession of core-skill or attributes that a type of employer (discipline-linked, sector-related, company-type) specifies. Employability is not just dependent upon the labour market forces, but also on other factors like willingness, training, capacity, capability, mobility (skill enhancement) and functional flexibility (changing shifts, working beyond job description) (Misra& Mishra, 2021).

Graduate employability is multifaceted and encompasses academic performance, career management skills and labour market awareness. Graduate employability is the ability of graduates to secure jobs in the labour market, being equipped with most of the skills envisaged by the employers and the ability to participate and contribute to the knowledge economy by applying what they learned in higher education and this will as a result, improve their social standing and the country's economy. Being career resilient also increases one's level of employability, being able to adapt to the changing working



environment given rise to by globalisation and technology and many factors like the political climate and the country's economy. Continuous learning and development and generic skills increase one's employability prospects (Kelebogile, 2019).

### **Communication skills**

The word "Communicate" comes from the Latin verb "Communicare" that means to impart, to participate, to share or to make common. By virtue of its Latin origin it is also the source of the English word "Common". Thus, communication is defined as the process of conveying or transmitting a message from one person to another through a proper channel. Communication skills stand out as a crucial component among the generic skills imperative for university students, as highlighted by Iksan, Zakaria, Meerah, Osman, Lian, Mahmud and Krish (2022). These skills encompass the capacity to swiftly discern external expressions, predict the inner psychology of individuals (the subjects of communication), and adeptly utilize linguistic and nonverbal elements. Moreover, mastering the ability to adjust the communication process to achieve specific objectives is integral to communication skills. Recognizing the significance of this skill set, business education students in universities, particularly in Nigeria (2020), emphasize the cultivation of communication skills.

Communication skills are those skills students acquire within the walls of an institution as well as the society so as to communicate effectively with superiors, colleagues and staff. Communication skills include listening, friendliness, confidence, respect, feedback etc. The importance of communication skills cannot be overemphasize in any organization, lack of effective communication may lead to the fall of any organization, this is because, the language of any business lies in effective communication and it's the life wire of all organization.

In the contemporary globalized landscape, proficiency in communication skills becomes indispensable for university students given the diverse cultural contexts they

encounter (Penbek, Yurdakul&Cerit, 2019). Notably, a shift in perception occurred over the years regarding the importance of communication skills. An analysis by Buckley, Peach & Weitzel (2019) comparing two studies on the qualifications sought by recruiters of business graduates revealed a notable ascent in the ranking of communication skills, evolving from not being in the top five in 1975 to securing the top position in 1983.

Numerous studies, such as those conducted by Ihmeideh, Al-Omari & Al-Dababneh (2020) and Cleland, Foster & Moffat (2020), underscore the positive impact of a communication-rich environment in enhancing students' communication skills. Therefore, it is imperative for university students to be provided with opportunities for comprehensive skill development, particularly in the realm of communication skills.

### **Computer literacy skills**

Computer literacy skills are the ability to function independently with a computer. This functionality includes being able to solve and avoid problems, adapt to new situations, keep information organized and communicate effectively with other computer literate. It of interest to note that there is no organization that does not use computer, so it will be difficult for any employee that is not expose to computer literacy to work effectively without having issue in operating the computer. Computer literacy is referred to the knowledge and capabilities to make use of computers and other technologies in an efficient manner. Computer literacy can also take into account the comfort level of the individuals that they have in making use of computer literacy programs and applications. In the present existence, it is of utmost significance for individuals, belonging to various categories and backgrounds to possess computer skills. The individuals are making use of computers as well as other forms of technologies in all spheres. These include, pursuance of education, getting engaged in various types of employment opportunities, generating awareness in terms of various subjects and

concepts, preparation of articles, reports, projects as well as other assignments, leisure and recreational purposes and so forth. In order to carry out these jobs in an adequate manner, it is vital for the individuals to enhance their technical skills. Therefore, computer literacy programs are regarded to render an indispensable contribution in up-grading of technical skills among individuals.

Computer literacy programs are considered important and in all fields, it is vital for the individuals to up-grade their computer skills. Within the course of one's employment in organizations, agencies, financial institutions, educational institutions and so forth, the employers want their employees to be well-equipped with usage of computers. Whereas, within the course of pursuance of education as well, from nursery schools till university level education, the students need to hone their computer skills, as in this manner, they will be able to pursue academic goals in a well-organized and efficacious manner. Hence, it can be stated that computers facilitate the implementation of tasks and functions in a less time consuming and efficient manner. When the individuals aspire to hone their computer skills, they get enrolled in computer literacy programs. In these programs, the range of skills are from elementary use to computer programming, utilization of software and advanced problem solving. The utilization of computer skills is dependent upon the job duties that need to be performed.

Some believe that computer literacy has involved preparation of persons to serve as worthy citizens in their communities and understand how society operates in an information age (Burniske, 2021). In addition, accreditation associations and governing boards typically include computer literacy standards. For example, AACSB-International has standards related to usage of the library and computers. The Kansas Board of Regents' qualified-admission curriculum for precollege students requires a unit of high school credit in computer technology as one of the options for college entrance. Increased workplace demands for computer literate employees will not likely

abate, and today's students will encounter more challenges involving job and career changes in their quest for success. Orrell (2019) speculates that students will change jobs up to 10 times with as many as three career changes.

The main purpose of this study is to assess the Influence of students' industrial works experience in developing employability skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. The study specifically seeks:

1. To determine the influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City.
2. To find out the influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City.

The following research questions were raised to guide this study.

1. To what extent does students' industrial works experience influence the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City?
2. To what extent does students' industrial works experience influence the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City?

The following null hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates students in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City;

2. There is no significant influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates students in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City

### **Data and Methodology**

This study is a quantitative research approach or technique that employs a correlational survey research design. Correlational survey research design was found to be appropriate for this study in that it will help the researcher to collect data from the respondents and draws a relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

The total population for this study consists of six hundred and seventy-seven (677) final year undergraduate students in the Departments of Education, Accounting, Mass Communication, Nursing Science and Medical Laboratory Science (BIU, Admissions Office, 2024). The justification for selecting students in the five Departments is based on the fact that these are the Departments whose students undergo students' industrial works experience scheme at the Heritage campus of Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. The choice of final year undergraduate students for the study is based on the fact that it is expected that these students would have undergone students' industrial works experience scheme.

The sample size to be used is 15% from the total population size (i.e. 677, 15% = 96). Stratified simple random sampling technique will be adopted.

**Table 1: Showing population and sample size of students in the selected departments**

S/N	Department	No. of students	Total Numeration	15% sample of students
1	<b>Education</b>	6	6	
2	<b>Accounting</b>	55		8
3	<b>Mass Communication</b>	20		3
4	<b>Nursing Science</b>	330		50
5	<b>Medical Laboratory Science</b>	148		22
	<b>Total</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>96</b>

The instrument for data collection in this study is a forty item instrument titled “Influence of Students’ Industrial Works Experience Scheme in Developing Employability Skills among Undergraduate Students Questionnaire (ISIWESDESUSQ). The questionnaire is divided into section A, B and C. Section A will contain demographic information of respondents such as gender, and academic class, while section B will comprise of items on employability skills while section C will contain items on Students’ Industrial Works experience Scheme. The instrument is a six-point Likert response format of (A) Always = 6, (O) Often = 5, (O) Occasional = 4 (R) Rare = 3, (VR) Very Rare = 2 and (NA) Not applicable = 1.

In order to determine the validity, face and content validity was used. Also in order to ensure the reliability, the instrument was administered on 30 respondents who are not part of the sample. The data collected were analyzed. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, data collected were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha statistic. The instrument yielded a coefficient value of 0.76. The score obtained was considered high enough for the instrument to be reliable.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Standard Deviation (SD) statistics was used for the analysis of data. The percentage count was used to answer the research questions while the PPMC was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The probability value (p) was used in taking the decisions regarding the hypothesis. If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 the null hypothesis was rejected, and if otherwise, the null hypothesis was retained.

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does students’ industrial works experience influence the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City?

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics showing the extent students’ industrial works experience influences the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City**

VARIABLES	r	r <sup>2</sup>	%
SIWES			
Students’ Communication Skill	0.37	0.13	13%

The data in the Table 2 showed the extent students’ industrial works experience influences the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. It is observed that there is a low correlation of 0.37 between the two variables under study. The coefficient of determination is 0.13. This implied that students’ industrial works experience has 13% influence on the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does students’ industrial works experience influence the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City?

**Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics showing the extent students’ industrial works experience influences the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City**

VARIABLES	r	r <sup>2</sup>	%
SIWES			
	0.31	0.09	09%

## Students' Computer Literacy Skill

The data in the Table 3 showed the extent students' industrial works experience influences the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. It is observed that there is a very low correlation of 0.31 between the two variables under study. The coefficient of determination is 0.09. This implied that students' industrial works experience has 09% influence on the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics showing the level of influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City

VARIABLES	r	r <sup>2</sup>	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
SIWES Students' Communication Skill	0.37	0.13	0.00	Don't Accept Ho

The data in the Table 4 showed the level of influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. It is observed that there is a low correlation of 0.37 between the two variables under study. The coefficient of determination is 0.13 and correlation is significant at 0.00. Since 0.00 is lower than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the hypothesis which says there is no significant influence of students'



industrial works experience on the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City is not accepted. This implied that there is a significant influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics showing the level of influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City

VARIABLES	r	r <sup>2</sup>	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
SIWES	0.31	0.09	0.00	Don't Accept Ho
Students' Computer Literacy Skill				

The data in the Table 5 showed the level of influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. It is observed that there is a low correlation of 0.31 between the two variables under study. The coefficient of determination is 0.09 and correlation is significant at 0.00. Since 0.00 is lower than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the hypothesis which says there is no significant influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City is not accepted. This implied that there is a significant influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City.

## Findings

The first finding in this study showed that there is a significant influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of communication skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. This may be due to the fact that the students were exposed to the training on how to communicate effectively if they would be employable and good entrepreneurs. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Atah and Abeng (2019) who determined the influence of institutional variables on employability skills acquisition among undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria and found that there is significant influence of communication skills on employability skills acquisition among Students and also the work of Neha, Arisha, Rahima, Saif and Abdul (2022) who investigated factors that can affect the overall graduate employability (OGE) of the private university graduates in a developing economy like Pakistan and found among others, a significant influence of SIWES on communication skills. In the same vein, the finding supports that of Ogundele, Nwabufo and Ademiluyi (2022) who examined Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme during corona virus epidemic and students employability skills in universities in North-central and South-western Nigeria and found that SIWES positively influence students' communication skill, teamwork skill and problem-solving skill to high extent during Corona Virus Epidemic.

The second finding ascertained that there is a significant influence of students' industrial works experience on the acquisition of computer literacy skills among undergraduates in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. This finding corresponds with that of Dahiru and Shua (2023) who examined the influence of business education curriculum content and SIWES on acquisition of employability skills among graduates of office technology management in Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State and found that office technology management curriculum content and SIWES significantly

influenced acquisition of employability skills among graduates of office technology management in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City.

### **Conclusion**

It can be concluded in this study that, there is a significant influence of SIWES on the acquisition of skills needed for self-reliance and establishment after graduation.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation was made:

- School authorities, especially, Benson Idahosa University, should emphasize on exposing students to SIWES as this study has showed clearly that SIWES facilitates the necessary skills for employability after graduation.

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