HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS COMPETENCE IN GARMENT MAKING FOR ENTREPRENUERSHIP: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

BY

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Abstract

This study was designed to ascertain garment making competence of Home Economics students in Delta State University, Abraka. It examined adequacy of tools and equipment required for smooth acquisition of the needed competence to accurately make garmentswith good fit for successful entrepreneurship. Tools and equipment at their disposal were considered. A survey design method was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 205 Home Economics students. A sample of one hundred and twenty (120) students was used for the study. The purpose of this study was to examine the prospects and challenges with regards to students' competence in garment making. Datawas collected using a structured questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed using frequencies, simple percentages, means and standard deviation. The result of the findings showed inadequate provision of garment making tools and equipment. Only 7out of 24 items were adequate, others were either not available or inadequate. The result of the findings showed that students are not very competent to make garments, which may pose challenges to self-reliance and employability. Some of the tools provided are not functional, neither is the laboratory adequately equipped for effective impartation of skills for entrepreneurship. Based on the findings, recommendation made include; government should(1)address the challenge of lack in the Clothing and Textiles laboratory to reposition vocational education training (2) fund and equip the Clothing and Textiles laboratory with modern tools and equipment for effectiveness,and to create conducive skill acquisition environment (3)School authority should set priorities in terms of regular maintenance of tools and equipment to forestall absolute breakdown of equipment beyond remedy among others.

Introduction

Functional impartation and acquisition of competencies and skills in garment construction through Home Economics education being a vocational course, will highly enhance students' prowess in creating patterns for standard garments as merchandise for commercial purposes and employability. A body of experts agreed in a meeting that Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) is the fundamental key to sustainable development strategies. They emphasized that, Vocational Education and Training help to facilitate the eradication of poverty, improvement of healthy lifestyle and meaningful livelihood (UNESCO, 2004). Thus, Vocational Education fits in here and should deliver the right type of instruction that will squarely and adequately address the educational needs of the society. Ochonogor and Oyebueke (2003) observed that the current rate of unemployment with its related problems and growth in technology, places an increased demand for students to be skillfully productive. Consequently, acquisition of skills and competence in garment making and construction being an area of Clothing and Textiles is a fundamental resource in overcoming unemployment and its attendant and challenges.

Apparently, career choice in pattern or garment making is a good and viable prospect for entrepreneurial empowerment for the practitioners. However, unemployment according to Diabelen and Adekola (2002) istraceable to the disequilibrium between the labour market requirements and lack of relevant employable skills on the parts of job seekers. Consequently, it is expedient for

educational Institutions to produce graduates who are competent to practice the vocation for which they have been trained in order to breach any disequilibrium that exist between joblessness and employability. Hence, Olusanya (2011) asserted that education which lacks the onus to generate employment to its citizen is nothing short of gross mis-education. Accordingly, Home Economics discipline focuses mainly on training individuals to acquire necessary skills, techniques, knowledge and attitude in order for them to become prospective, competent and effective home makers and professionals in their chosen field; which may be garment or apparel designing, textiles, food preparation, home or interior design, family living, consumer education and many other related aspects (Onweh, 2013)

A wide variety of options are open to students to specialize in depending on their area of interest and capabilities. Home economics is taught at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria as stated by (Arubayi, 2010). Training through the various levels should adequately prepare students in diverse skills without prejudice as bonafide or certified professionals. In agreement, Anyakoha (2006) affirmed that Home Economics being a vocational course is a unique discipline aimed at equipping individuals for active and competent participation in life within the family and work environment. Garment making is an entrepreneurial skill that can generate wealth for individuals, make them self-reliant, resource persons and employer of labour, if they engage others to render one service or the other to them in fashion designing. As a result competent students at graduation contribute meaningfully to sustainable national development. Home Economics discipline aims at enhancing the wellbeing of individuals, families and the society at large, because self-reliance reduces unemployment. When people are gainfully employed they feel happy and contented. However, without the appropriate skills, gainful employment will not be feasible. The essence of acquiring garment making skills is for students to be proficient in making apparels that are up to standard for consumers when they graduate. Thus, both theory and practice are of utmost importance to the achievement of desired competence in practical domains especially when joy and financial remuneration is derived (Obiazi and Ukpore 2014).

In this regard, students are taught practical garment making skills that will equip them with competence intended to generate employment that is fundamental for entrepreneurship and sustainable development. However, provision of adequate tools and equipment are essential to appropriate skill development in this area amongst other factors. Acquisition of vocational skills involves practical demonstrations that require the use of tools and or equipment. Inadequacy and lack of tools and equipment pose tremendous challenges to the development of the skills that will empower learners to make standard garments that will satisfy consumer taste and needs.. This challenge could mar the hope and aspirations of the students who desire to acquire appropriate skills in this area. Skills and techniques for successful garment making as an entrepreneurial venture and an aspect of Home Economics, also involves the conversion of fashion fabric into well-constructed garments that would attract acceptable patronage in the fashion industry. Arubayi and Obunadike (2011) emphasized that garment construction is a skill oriented course that can help an individual develop saleable skills for self-reliance. This means that Home Economics students are trained to acquire competencies needed to create or produce patterns or garment for entrepreneurial benefits or empowerment. According to Rajitha (2005) garment making is an introduction to basic skills of sewing which is essential to converting design sketches on paper into real garments. In other words, garment making is one of the basic content of Fashion designing. This assertion, suggest that, acquisition of necessary sewing skills and

techniques is pertinent to construction and production of standardized garment in today's fashion market. Moreover, provision of relevant tools and equipment cannot be undermined hence Vivekenand (2011) opined that there are pattern and garment making tools and equipment which are helpful in the construction of clothing articles. The successful acquisition of competence in making patterns for garment sections that will yield good fitting garments, depend largely on the provision and proper use of tools for the appropriate purpose. Some of the common tools and equipment used to develop patterns for the various garment parts depending on style and taste; and the actual sewing or construction of the garment are explained below.

A number of tools and equipment are required for marking and cutting of patterns, others are needed for sewing and finishing of garments. These tools and equipment facilitate the breakdown of garment sections into desirable styles and designs both on paper patterns and fashion fabric. These include; graduated measuring gadgets such as tape measure, L-square ruler, right angle, clear rulers, French curve, seam or sewing gauge. Others are variety of scissors for different functions, domestic iron, ironing table or board, tailor's ham, cutting table, tracing wheel and pins, seam ripper, domestic sewing machine, domestic lockstitch machine and many others are used for marking or cutting patterns and fabrics and actual sewing as well as finishing techniques(Wijendra, 2014). Without these tools and equipment, appropriation of garment making competence will be a mirage, important as these factors are, it is not encouraging to note that major and vital tools and equipment are lacking. Students rarely possess the vital tools needed for clothing skill impartation and the clothing laboratory is poorly equipped. This is a great challenge to both teachers who are to impart the skill and students who are to acquire the competence. Since a farmer does not go to his farm without his cutlass, as it is commonly said, teachers and students should be provided with adequate tools and equipment for a worthwhile garment making collaboration process.

Statement of the Problem

Students need to adequately acquire the skills and techniques to proficiently make garments with a view to benefit from the entrepreneurial and employable prospects therein. Moreover tools and equipment in the Home Economics laboratory are either in short supply, out rightly unavailable or dysfunctional irrespective of cost. This may pose challenges that may hinder garment making prospects for the students. The need to appraise available tools and equipment for students use, so as to overcome inherent challenges of the lack suffered arises.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the prospects and challenges with regards to Home Economics Students' competence in garment making for entreprenuership. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine tools and equipment available for students to acquire garment making skills and techniques.
2. Find out the challenges confronting students' competence in making garments for entrepreneurship.
3. Identify prospects of students competence in garment making

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What tools and equipment are available for students to learn garment making?
2. What challenges confronts students' competence in garment making?
3. Do any prospects exist for students' competence in entrepreneurial garment making?

Hypothesis

HO1: There is no significant difference between male and female students on challenges that confronts students' competence in garment making

Method and Procedure

The study adopted survey research method. The population comprised all Home Economics students in Delta State University, Abraka, and numbering two hundred and five (205). Purposive sampling technique was employed to obtain one hundred and twenty students (120) from 300 and 400 levels. Sample was purposive because these groups of students (300 and 400 level) have been taught to draft pattern and make garments. 100 and 200 level students were left out because they have not been taught to make garments on their own.

Questionnaire was used as instrument to elicit responses from respondents. Two experts validated the instrument. Data for testing the reliability of the instrument were generated through a single administration of the instrument to respondents comprising of twenty (20) Home Economics students from University of Benin, Edo State. Split-half technique and Cronbach alpha statistical package were used to test the reliability index of the instrument. A coefficient value of 0.79 was obtained. The high coefficient suggests that the instrument was reliable for the study. Data was collected from the respondents with the help of two research assistants who were trained in distribution and collection of instruments from respondents. All the copies distributed where duly retrieved.

Data collected from the field was analyzed using the mean, percentage, frequency and standard deviation. The mean score of 2.50and above was considered valid. The hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance to determine acceptance or rejection. SPSS 16 statistical package was used to analyse the data.

Results and Discussion of Findings: The results of the study are presented in the Tables below:

Research Question 1

Table 1: Tools and equipment available for students to learn garment making (N = 120)

S/N	Tools and Equipment	Availability (%)	
		Yes	No
1	Seam/Sewing Guage	0 (0)	100 (100)
2	L-Square	0 (0)	100 (100)
3	Cutting Tables	26.67 (32)	73.33 (88)
4	Household Iron	34.16 (41)	65.83(79)
5	Ironing Table	10 (12)	90 (108)
6	Ironing Board	35.83 (43)	64.16(77)
7	Tailor's Ham	4.16 (5)	95.8 (115)
8	Sleeve Board	28.33(34)	71.66(86)
9	Domestic Sewing Machine	81.66(98)	18.33(22)
10	Domestic Lockstitch Machine	28.33(34)	71.66(86)
11	Industrial Lockstitch Machine	28.33(34)	71.66(86)
12	Serger	44.16 (53)	55.83 (67)
13	Bobbins	65 (78)	35 (42)
14	Tape Measure	85(102)	15(18)
15	Rulers	98.33(118)	1.66 (2)
16	French Curve		
17	Hip or Miscellaneous Curves	35.83 (43)	64.17 (77)
18	Dressmakers Shears	91.66 (110)	8.33(10)
19	Paper Scissors	100 (120)	0 (0)
20	Seam Ripper	0 (0)	100 (120)

21	Tracing Wheels	34.16 (41)	65.83 (79)
22	Tailor's chalk	46.66 (56)	53.33 (64)
23	Dressmakers pins	120 (100)	0 (0)
24	Hand Sewing Needles	120 (100)	0 (0)
25	Thimbles	12.5 (15)	87.5 (105)
26	Bodkin	15.84 (19)	84.16 (101)
27	Needle Threader	35.83 (43)	64.16 (77)

Note: figures in bracket are the frequency of students

Table 1 showed the tools and equipment required for garment making. The responses of the students' revealed that most of the tools and equipment required to learn garment making are not available in the clothing laboratory.

Research Question 2

Table 2:Challenges confronting students competence in garment making **(N=120)**

S/N	Statement items	Mean	S.D	Remark
1	Lack of tools, equipment and facilities limit students ability in clothing skill acquisition	3.73	0.62	Agreed
2	Crowdedness and limited space is a prevalent occurrence in the clothing laboratory	3.59	0.74	Agreed
3	Limited man-power (technical staff) or resource persons hinder the teaching and learning of clothing skills	3.43	0.77	Agreed
4	Competent lecturers who teach clothing skills are few	3.68	0.68	Agreed
5	Lecturers verbally explain practical lessons due to lack of equipment for practical demonstrations.	3.78	0.81	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The result in Table 2 showed the mean response of the respondents. The mean values were above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicated that the items were problems confronting students' competence in garment making. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.71 to 1.29. This indicated that the respondents were unanimous in their responses as they did so independently.

Research Question 3

Tables 3: Prospects available for students competence in garment making **(N = 120)**

S/N	Statement items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Creative ability to design various styles or designs of garments	3.41	0.78	Agreed
2	Adeptness in taking accurate body measurement to produce standard fitting garments.	3.56	0.74	Agreed
3	Know-how to draft patterns to fit different body figure types.	3.37	0.84	Agreed
4	Proper interpretation of pattern drawing instructio symbols and codes on commercial patterns.			
5	Ability to copy and convert existing garment styles to new ones	2.61	1.13	Agreed
6	Production of standard garments for entrepreneurship.	2.89	1.24	Agreed

7	Converting garment design sketches to accurate patterns and actual garments	2.50	1.29	Agreed

The result in Table 3 showed that the respondents agreed that the items indicated prospects and advantages garment making competencies hold for students who adequately and proficiently acquire the skill. The mean values were above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.71 to 1.29. This indicated that the respondents were unanimous in their responses as they did so independently.

Hypothesis

HO_1: There is no significant difference between male and female students on challenges that confronts students' competence in garment making

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of students on challenges that confronts students' competence in garment making

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Male	10	3.42	0.81	1.92	1.96	Accepted
Female	110	3.09	0.76			
Total	**120**					

Source: Field Work, 2016

Table 4 showed that the t-calculated value of 1.92 was less than the t-tab value of 1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. This showed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on challenges that confronts their competence in garment making.

Findings of the Study

The findings from the study presented in Tables 1 to 4 indicated inadequate provision of equipment. Only 7 out of 24items in research question one indicated adequacy while the remaining 17 indicated outright lack or inadequate. The mean values of all items in tables 2-4 were above the cutoff point of 2.50 which is an indication that prospects abound in garment making and there are challenges also confronting students in-depth acquisition of know-how for clothing skills. The findings revealed some prospects derivable in learning garment production skills and techniques which are: ccreative ability to design various styles or designs of garments, adeptness in taking accurate body measurement to produce standard fitting garments, know-how to draft patterns to fit different body figure types, proper interpretation of pattern drawing instructions, symbols and codes on commercial patterns, ability to copy and convert existing garment styles to new ones, production of standard garments for entrepreneurship, converting garment design sketches to accurate patterns and actual garments as shown in table 3. While table , cchallenges, limitations and hindrances that students encounter in learning garment making are Lack of tools, equipment and facilities, crowdedness and limited space per student, Limited man-power and verbal instruction rather than practical demonstration of skills. Alabi (2013) supports the finding that insufficient funds and equipment for practical among others, are constraints to acquisition of competence by students for entrepreneurship which is a major prospect in vocational education. Whereas, Clothing and Textiles laboratory should be large enough to accommodate considerable number of students per class, have large storage space for equipment and facilities to enhance performance and competence (Onweh, 2013). Anything short of this amounts to mis-directed effort that is not profitable in any regard to knowledge or education of the citizenry.

Moreover, entrepreneurship is a major prospect for acquiring vocational skills especially in an era of large scale unemployment. Iloejo and Anyawu (1991) disclosed that failure rate of small scale business set up by Home Economics students are high. This failure can be attributed to lack of adequate entrepreneurial skills arising from factors such as short supply of tools, equipment and facilities among other reasons. It is therefore expedient for short fall in equipment and supplies for garment making to be addressed in order to revitalize and revamp the Clothing and Textile laboratory in order to accomplish the desired goals for vocational education.

Conclusion

The study reveals that students' effort towards being properly equipped to acquire required competence is stalled because they neither possess adequate tools by themselves nor are they provided for by the institution. Both sponsors and the institution are to provide the needed tools and equipment in order not to stall students' effort in learning garment making. There should be concerted collaboration between parents, guardian, sponsors and government to complement one another in providing adequate tools, equipment and facilities for students to be competently trained. In other words, parents or sponsors should make it a point of duty to augment government efforts in providing adequate tools for their children and wards to be well resourced. The laboratory is not well equipped to promote proper learning of adequate skills. This unhealthy situation can only be curbed by overcoming the challenges in order to enjoy the prospects thereof. Acquisition of skills in garment making is expected to furnish students with requisite capability and competence to produce garments for global acceptance. Onweh (2013) posited that most tertiary institutions are running vocational programs without the recommended minimum standard for operation. Besides, Onweh categorically asserted that garment making has gone beyond "traditional cuts and join". Modern designs with elaborate and complex styling features emerge year in year out. So, students need to be currently upgraded with best practices for skill acquisition in the educational programs such as Home Economics discipline, being a vocational field of study. It is pertinent to point out that without provision of relevant tools and equipment by all stake holders, students cannot attain competence required for a successful entrepreneurship process in garment production in this era and age of technological advancement.

Recommendations

1. The government should as a matter of urgency, address the challenge of lack in the Clothing and Textiles laboratory to reposition vocational education training
2. The government should provide funds, modern equipment and tools for effective running of the Clothing laboratory to create conducive skill acquisition environment that will encourage students' prowess in garment making for entrepreneurship.
3. School authorities should set priorities in terms of maintenance to forestall absolute breakdown of equipment beyond remedy.
4. More awareness should be created to showcase the prospects of cloth making endeavours by way of exhibitions, seminars, workshops, internal and external competition exercises between State and Federal owned institutions.
5. Parents should endeavor to provide students with relevant tools and equipment to augment government efforts to facilitate effective acquisition of competence.

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