

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES AND PROMOTION OF CLOTHING AND TEXTILES STUDENTS' SKILL ACQUISITION IN THE ERA OF ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

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### **Abstract**

The study examined quality assurance strategies and promotion of Clothing and Textiles Students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State. The study was guided by two specific purposes, two research questions and two null hypotheses. The correlational design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 70 senior secondary two (SS II) Clothing and Textiles students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The sample size of 61 senior secondary two (SS II) students was obtained through stratified sampling technique from three public secondary schools selected for the study. A researcher developed instrument titled "Quality Assurance Strategies and Promotion of Clothing and Textiles Students Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (QASPCTSSAQ)" was used to generate data. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained through cronbach alpha formula. Data obtained were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and Pearsons Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test the null hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that, the two null hypothesis were rejected implying there is a significant relationship between quality assurance strategies (industry collaboration and entrepreneurship training) and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State. Based on these findings, it is concluded that industry collaboration and entrepreneurship training are indispensable tools on means of promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skills acquisition. It is recommended among others that stakeholders in education should create a strong relationship with industry so that Clothing and Textiles students be equipped with modern practical skills amid theoretical education in order to succeed even in the era of economic uncertainties.

**Keywords:** Quality assurance, Quality assurance strategies, Clothing and Textiles, Skill acquisition, Economic uncertainties

## **Introduction**

In recent years, the Nigeria education sector particularly in vocational disciplines such as Clothing and Textiles has faced significant challenges due to economic fluctuations. These uncertainties have led to an increased emphasis on ensuring that students are equipped with necessary skills to remain competitive in the job market. Quality Assurance (QA) in education plays a pivotal role in this regard, serving as a mechanism to maintain and improve the quality of educational programmes, thereby enhancing students' skill acquisition.

Quality Assurance (QA) is viewed as the processes or procedures used to ensure that quality of educational programmes, products and services are improved. In the context of education, Quality Assurance involves evaluating and improving the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment and not just a compliance exercise, but it includes key concepts and themes such as quality culture and leadership, curriculum design and delivery, teaching and learning methodologies, assessment and evaluation strategies, students feedback and engagement; and accreditation and accountability (Sahney, 2020). Quality assurance strategies enhance entrepreneurship skill acquisition, improve learning outcomes, relevance to industry needs and employability. In the context of economic uncertainties, quality assurance strategies can foster adaptability and resilience in students of Clothing and Textiles (Udo, 2020 and Nda, 2018).

Clothing and Textiles is an interdisciplinary field that combines art, design, science, technology and business to create functional and aesthetically pleasing products that meet human needs. Clothing and Textiles as one of the vocational subject under the umbrella of Home Economics is a skill oriented, aims at equipping the learners with saleable skills needed for self-reliance (Anyakoha, 2014). In Akwa Ibom State, the Clothing and Textiles sector has the potential to contribute significantly to the local economy. However, the effectiveness of this contribution largely depends on the skills of the workforce, which in turn are shaped by the quality of education and training Clothing and Textiles students received. Therefore, understanding how Quality Assurance strategies can enhance skill acquisition in this sector is vital for both educational stakeholders and policy makers. By focusing on Quality Assurance, educational institutions can better prepare students for the challenges of the current and the future job markets, particularly during periods of economic downturn (Oluwaseun & Taiwo, 2020).

Skill acquisition as the process of learning and mastering of specific skills or competencies is crucial for Clothing and Textiles students in Akwa Ibom State, particularly in the era of economic uncertainties. Students need to acquire skills that are relevant to the industry such as technical skills, business skills, digital skills and soft skills (Udo, 2020). Technical skills refer to the specialised knowledge and expertise required to perform specific tasks and operations often involving manual or practical skills in the industry. By acquiring these skills enable Clothing and Textiles students to produce high-quality garments, work efficiently and effectively in the industry, adapt new technologies and equipment, develop innovative designs and products (Akpama, 2020).

Economic Uncertainties is viewed as situations where the future of the economy is unpredictable, which brings about challenges for individuals, businesses and government to make informed decisions (Kumar, 2020). These uncertainties can emanate from some factors which include globalization and trade policies; political instability and governance; technological advancements and automation; environmental climate change, fluctuations in commodity prices and exchange rates (Sharma, 2022; Gupta, 2022; Acharya, 2020; Jain, 2020 and Sahney, 2020). These factors can give rise to unemployment and job insecurity, reduced consumer spending and economic growth, increased poverty and income inequality (Kumar, 2020; Nair, 2020 and Yusuf, 2020). Economic uncertainties, such as those experienced in Nigeria, exacerbate the challenges faced by Vocational Education. With

limited resources and fluctuating job markets, it becomes even more for educational institutions to implement robust Quality Assurance (QA) measures. These measures not only help in maintaining the quality of education, but also in adapting to the rapidly changing demands of the economy. As such, the role of Quality Assurance in promoting skill acquisition among Clothing and Textiles students is increasingly important in the era of economic instability (Oladele and Adeyemi, 2021).

Industry collaboration plays a crucial role in enhancing Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition, particularly in the uncertain economic times. Collaborative efforts between educational institutions and industry partners can develop innovative thinking and problem-solving skills which enable students to create sustainable fashion business (Lee, 2018). Building industry relationships with skill acquisition, effective quality assurance encourages educational institutions to form strong ties with industry stakeholders, leading to opportunities such as internship, students industrial work experiences schemes (SIWES) and industry-informed curricula. Such connections are vital for Clothing and Textiles students to gain hands-on experience and to acquire skills that are relevant in the job market, especially in an uncertain economy (Oladele & Adeyemi, 2021).

Entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in enhancing skill acquisition of Clothing and Textiles students, particularly during periods of economic instability. This is possible through providing students with essential business skills, creativity and the ability to capitalize on opportunities. Such training is not only strengthens students' technical abilities but also fosters a business-oriented mindset. This preparation is vital for adapting to economic challenges, enabling students to transform uncertainties into avenues for self-employment and economic progress. The integration of technical expertise with entrepreneurial knowledge is the key to thriving in the Clothing and Textiles sector, especially in economically uncertain times (Doe and Green, 2023).

Consequently, Ekpenyong (2020) carried out a research on the impact of skill acquisition on economic development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that there was significant positive relationship between skill acquisition and economic development.

Ibok (2022) also conducted a research on the effect of quality assurance strategies on student learning outcomes in vocational education and training programme in Nigeria. Findings revealed that effective quality assurance strategies significantly improved students learning outcome. These assertions indicate that quality assurance strategies could be indispensable instruments for improving students' learning outcome.

In view of foregoing, this study is carried out to examine the relationship between quality assurance strategy (industry collaboration and entrepreneurship training), and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the area of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The researcher has observed a myriad of challenges that hinder skill acquisition and economic growth. Essien (2021) observed that lack of effective Quality Assurance (QA) strategies, which leads to a shortage of skilled workers and limited productivity. These challenges resulted in a mismatch between the skills acquired by students and the needs of the industry. Despite the previous research, Clothing and Textiles students is plagued by inadequate infrastructure, outdated training methods and these hinder the acquisition of relevant skills (Udo, 2018). The consequences upon these challenges include reduced economic growth, decreased standard of living and increased poverty levels. The efforts of Akwa Ibom State to promote skill acquisition has been hindered by the lack of effective. Therefore, this study seeks to address the challenges of ineffective Quality Assurance (QA)

strategies and promote skill acquisition in Clothing and Textiles students in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to examine Quality Assurance strategies and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textile students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties.
2. examine the relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions were raised to guide the study. These are:

1. What is the relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties?
2. What is the relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Two research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties.
2. There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The study adopted correlational design.

#### **Area of the Study**

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State which houses the three public secondary schools in the three Senatorial District which are Eket, Ikot Ekpene and Uyo Senatorial districts.

#### **Population of the Study**

Population of the study comprised 79 senior secondary two (SSII) students offering Clothing and Textiles in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

#### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample size of 61 senior secondary two (SSII) students was obtained through stratified sampling technique from three public secondary schools selected for the study based on the three senatorial districts.

#### **Instrumentation**

The instrument for data collection was researcher's structured questionnaire titled "Quality Assurance Strategies and Promotion of Clothing and Textiles Students' Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (QASPCTSSAQ)" with four-points rating scale of "Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree". The instrument contained 5 items for industry collaboration and 5 items for entrepreneurship training, representing a total of 10 items.

### Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by three experts, one in Department of Test and Measurement and two in Home Economics Education to ascertain the face and content validity. Suggestions and corrections were incorporated to update the final copy of the items.

### Reliability of the Instrument

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was carried out using 20 Clothing and Textiles students who were not part of the study. The data collected were analysed using Cronbach alpha reliability statistical tool which yield a reliability coefficient of 0.81.

### Method of Data Collection

61 copies of the instrument were randomly administered to the respondents on the spot and retrieved after completion. The return rate yielded 100%.

### Analysis

Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.5 level of significance.

The cut-off mark for mean of each item on four-point rating scale was 2.5. Therefore, any item with mean score of 2.5 and above was considered as having significant relationship. On the other hand, any item with a mean score of below 2.5 was considered as not having significant relationship. To test the null hypotheses, if the calculated value (t-cal) is greater than (>) the critical value (t-crit), null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected in favour of alternate hypothesis, but if the calculated value (t-cal) is less than (<) the critical value (t-crit), null hypothesis (Ho) is retained at 0.05 level of significance.

### Results

#### Research Question 1

What is the relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties?

Data collected with items 1 – 5 of the instrument were used to answer this research question. Summary of results is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Mean Ratings on Relationship between Industry Collaboration and Promotion of Clothing and Textiles Students Skill Acquisition (N=61)

S/N	Items on Industry Collaboration	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Industry collaboration allows Clothing and Textiles students to connect with experienced professionals that help acquire technical skills.	3.38	1.08	Agree
2	Clothing and Textiles students gain exposure to real-world practices with supports from fashion industry or enterprise.	3.62	1.09	Agree
3	Industries can provide feedback on students' academic improvement.	3.68	1.12	Agree
4	Industry collaboration ensure that Clothing and Textiles curriculum aligns with current market trends, tools and technologies	3.52	1.24	Agree
5	Students who undergo industrial training gain skills needed to start their own business.	4.01	1.10	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.64</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Results on Table 1 above showed that all the items on industry collaboration from 1 to 5 showed a mean rating of more than 2.50, which indicated that the respondents agreed to all

the items as industry collaboration had a strong relationship with Clothing and Textiles' skill acquisition. There is also homogeneity in items among Clothing and Textiles' skill acquisition. There is also homogeneity in items among Clothing and Textiles students' responses indicating a consensus.

### Research Question 2

What is the relationship between entrepreneurship training and the promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties?

Data collected with items 6-10 of the instrument were used to answer this research questions. Summary of results is presented on Table 2.

**Table 2:** Mean Ratings on Relationship between Entrepreneurship and Promotion of Clothing and Textiles Students' Skill Acquisition

S/N	Items on Entrepreneurships Training	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
6	Entrepreneurship training enhances creativities in Clothing and Textiles students.	3.72	1.12	Agree
7	Entrepreneurship training fosters innovation, encouraging students to develop unique and marketable Clothing and Textiles products	3.68	1.06	Agree
8	Entrepreneurship training enhances students to gain practical skills on garment construction, fashion, etc.	4.03	1.03	Agree
9	Entrepreneurship training enhances students to create employment opportunities for themselves and also be employer of labour	3.80	1.15	Agree
10	Entrepreneurship training promotes resilience, enable students to bounce back from setback and failures.	3.61	1.12	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.77	1.10	Agree

As shown in Table 2 above, all the items showed a mean of more than 2.50, which indicated that the respondents agreed to all the items as entrepreneurship training had a strong relationship with Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition. There is also a homogeneity in items among Clothing and Textiles students' responses, indicating a consensus. The result of null hypotheses tested are presented in Table 3 and 4.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties.

**Table 3:** Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis of Relationship between Industry Collaboration and Promotion of Clothing and Textiles Students' Skill Acquisition in the Era of Economic Uncertainties N = 61

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-crit	r-cal	Decision at p < .05
Industry collaboration (X)	1084	34789				
Clothing and Textiles students skill acquisition (Y)	1894	61168	2978	.250	.526	*

\* = Significant at p < .05 level, df = 59

Result in Table 3 shows the significant relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition. The result reveals that the

calculated r-value of .526 is strong in nature and in positive direction. This means that there is a strong positive relationship between industry collaboration and Clothing and Textiles and promotion of students' skill acquisition. The table also reveals that the calculated r-value of .526 is greater than the critical r-value of .250 at .05 alpha level of significance with 59 degree of freedom, which implies that the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria is rejected in favour of alternate hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties.

**Table 4:** Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis of Relationship between Entrepreneurship Training and Promotion of Clothing and Textiles Students' Skill Acquisition in the Era of Economic Uncertainties N = 61

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-crit	r-cal	Decision at p < .05
Entrepreneurial Training (X)	1067	34316				
Clothing and Textiles students skill acquisition (Y)	1894	61168	5174	.250	.528	*

\* = Significant at p < .05 level, df = 59

Result in Table 4 shows the relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties. The result reveals that the calculated r-value of .528 is strong in nature and in a positive direction. This implies that there is a strong positive relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition. The positive relationship occurs, because the increase in entrepreneurship training is associated with increases in Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The table also reveals that the calculated r-value of .528 is greater than the critical r-value of .250 at .05 alpha level with 59 degree of freedom. This implies that the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria is rejected in favour of alternate one. The result indicates that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study from Table 3 revealed a strong relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State. This is in agreement with Oladele and Adeyemi (2021) who maintained that building industry relationship with skill acquisition, effective quality assurance encourages educational institution to form strong ties with the industry stakeholders, and this can lead to opportunities such as internship, student industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) and industry-informed curricula. They also maintained, that

such connections are vital for Clothing and Textiles students to gain hands-on experience and to acquire skills that are relevant in the job market, especially in an uncertain economy.

The findings of the study in Table 3 also revealed, that there is a significant relationship between industry collaboration and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State. This is in agreement with the study of Jones (2021) who opined that partnerships between academia and industry help to close the gap between theoretical education and its practical application, making students to be more versatile and better equipped to meet industry demands.

The findings of the study in Table 4 revealed a strong relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State. The result is in line with Lee (2018) who opined, that by integrating comprehensive entrepreneurship training into educational curriculum, Clothing and Textiles students can develop entrepreneurial mindset which enable them to identify opportunities, innovate and create value in the fashion enterprise/industry.

The findings of the study in table 4 also revealed that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship training and promotion of Clothing and Textile students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State. This study is in agreement with the study of Doe and Green (2023) who maintained that entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in enhancing skill acquisition of Clothing and Textiles students, particularly during the periods of economic instability. They further added that the enhancement is possible through providing students with essential business skills, creativity and ability to capitalize on opportunities, which at the end help students to adapt to economic challenges, transform uncertainties into avenues for self-employment and economic progress.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the result of findings, it was concluded that quality assurance strategies such as industry collaboration, and entrepreneurship training relate positively and significantly to promotion of Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties in Akwa Ibom State. However, quality assurance strategies have strong relationship in promoting Clothing and Textiles students' skill acquisition in the era of economic uncertainties.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Stakeholders in education should create a strong relationship with enterprise/industry so that Clothing and Textiles students be equipped with modern practical skills and theoretical education to succeed even in era of economic uncertainties.
2. State Secondary Education Board (SSEB) should organise workshops, seminars for entrepreneurship training and retraining in the field of Clothing and Textiles for teachers and students so that they can update their knowledge and skills in this digital age.

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