FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS IN APPLIQUÉ NEEDED BY HOME-ECONOMICS STUDENTS IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This study identified fundamental skills in appliqué needed by Home-Economics students for self-reliance and poverty reduction. To carry out this research, three research questions were raised; the first research question was answered using means and mean differences, while the last two were answered using mean and standard deviation. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. 60 lecturers and 340 final year students of universities that offer Home-Economics education in the five states of the south-eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria formed the population of the study. No sampling for the population was manageable. A structured questionnaire constructed and validated by experts was used for data collection. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaires was 0.82 and 0.71 respectively for the two scale components. The data analyses revealed three novel appliquéing skills needed by Home-Economics students for self- employment. It was recommended that there is need for a well planned industrial training to bridge the gap between school and industry and need for adequate funding of universities amongst others.

Key Words: Skill, University Education, Home-economics, Home-economics students, Clothing and Textile, Appliqué

Introduction

Skill is anything that the individual has learned to do with ease and precision, it may be physical or mental performance, involving manipulative proficiency in hand and finger and eye coordination. It is a term that encompasses the knowledge, competencies and abilities to perform operational tasks. Breivik, (2016) states that skills denote expertise that has been developed through training and experience. In teaching a skill, emphasis is on practicing the skills and improving on the skill to form a habit. According to Bush (2020), skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular function or task till expertise is achieved in the skill. Skills are developed through life and work experiences and they can also be learned through study. One of the ways skills could be learned through study is University Education.

Universities are institutions designed to offer education to individuals who desire to increase their knowledge in specific fields. The purpose of university education is to facilitate the advancement of knowledge and the development of high cognitive skills in the community. As a result, people become productive members of society who care about the well-being of others. University education has evolved to meet the needs of an involved global community. It prepares individuals to deal with a variety of challenges by equipping them with problem-solving skills. Students will experience personal development while in university. Things such as critical thinking skills, time management, perseverance, communication and presentation skills are all great assets not only for future work but for personal life as well. University education brings individuals to a high level of intellectual development in the arts and science by providing them with several programes of which Home-economics education is one of them.

Home Economics education is one of the vocational subjects taught in Nigerian Educational system especially in most universities. It is an area of vocational education which plays a vital role in preparing students for careers in various domestic and community settings, including textile and clothing design, culinary arts and

Home-Management. (IFHE, 2004) in (Caroline , 2015) stated that Home Economics is both a body of theoretical knowledge, based on exact sciences and humanities and forms of practice, backed up by appropriate technologies. Anyakoha (2008), views Home Economics as a field of knowledge and service primarily concerned with strengthening the family life through educating the individual for family living. She stated further that it helps individual and family members to maximize their own and society's productivity and also helps people adjust to changes and shape their future. Home-economics as a field of study comprises of several subject areas like home-management, foods and nutririon, child development, clothing and textiles amongst others.

Clothing and textiles is a branch of Home Economics education that is concerned with the acquisition and development of practical skills by the beneficiaries. It is concerned with teaching the students characteristics of different fabrics, designing, sewing and reasons for choice of clothes. It also involves the knowledge of the different textiles, principles of clothing selection and maintenance, interior decoration etc. Yarmi (2017), opined that clothing and textiles is an area of Home-economics that exposes students to diversify curriculum. Igbo (2013), also said that every individual is a consumer of clothing and textile in one form or the other, either as a direct purchaser, a manufacturer or a merchandiser. According to Mberengwe (2004) in Yarmi, (2017) Clothing and Textiles Education is primarily education for vocation. This means it is a type of education that inculcates in the students attitudes, knowledge, skills and values that are required in the society thereby, producing healthy, literate and self-reliant citizens that will create wealth for human development when they become self-employed resulting to sustainable nation's development at large. Clothing and textiles as a skill-oriented subject has different skill-based which are all designed to provide students with skills needed for fabric composition, clothing selection, home sewing and mending, clothing design and production, personal hygiene, good grooming and prepares the students for working in textile and clothing industries.

The different skill-based areas include; garment making, pattern drafting, soft furnishing/interior decoration, laundry,dry cleaning, fabric decoration amongst others.

Fabric refers to any material made through weaving, knitting, spreading, crocheting, or bonding that may be used in production of further goods (garments). It can be viewed as any cloth made from yarn or fibres by weaving, knitting, felting among others. For aesthetic appearance, all fabrics go through one or more of a series of finishing processes such as dyeing, printing, designing or appliqué.

Appliqué is basically the cutting out of shapes from one fabric and then sewing it on to another. Reynold and watson (2000) in describing appliqué stated that it is a French term meaning to 'put on' or apply. In appliqué, one layer of fabric is placed over another layer and is sewn in place. Appliqué is a decorative technique achieved either traditionally by hand or machine by superimposing patches of coloured or plain fabrics over a base fabric. There are several skills in appliqué which include hand appliqué, needle turn appliqué, naïve appliqué using buttonhole decorative stitch, hand or machine appliqué using a stabilizer, reverse appliqué, machine appliqué (traditioally or by freehand method) cutting skill, cutting skill, needle turn appliqué using freezer paper, use of patch work among others. Appliqué, as a needlework and decorative technique, holds particular significance in textiles and clothing design. Understanding the specific skills in appliqué needed by Home-Economics students in South east Nigeria can contribute to enhancing the curriculum, teaching methods and learning outcomes in these programs and its application by Home-Economics students will improve their dexterity hence making them self reliant in a world ravaged by youth unemployment.

Unemployment and unemployable graduates poses serious threat to individuals, families and the society. Unemployment is one of the developmental problems/emerging issues that face most developing economy in the 21st Century (Patterson, Okafor & Williams, 2006). In

today's world, merely having a degree is not a reliable indicator of the individual's competence in a job, rather, current and relevant knowledge, practical experience, soft skills are supposed tool to be competitive in the job market (Nwike & Ede, 2023). Thus, investigating the skills in appliqué needed by Home-Economics students can have implications for producing employable graduates, promoting cultural preservation and sustainable development, graduates who are self reliant and possibly employers of labour. By understanding and promoting traditional appliqué techniques, the study can contribute to the preservation and promotion of indigenous textile artistry in the face of globalization and modernization.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to identify the fundamental skills in appliqué needed by Home-Economics students in south-eastern Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study identified:

1. skills in appliqué possessed and needed by students in Universities in South-East Nigeria.
2. the hindrances to acquiring these skills.
3. ways of curbing these hindrances to improve students skill acquisition in applique.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered by the study:

1. What are the skills in appliqué possessed and needed by students in Universities in South-East Nigeria?
2. what are the hindrances to acquiring these skills?
3. what are ways of curbing these hindrances to improve students' skill acquisition in applique?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was employed in the study in order to collect data from lecturers and final year students of Home-economics, textiles unit of fine and applied arts and home science

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departments of five universities offering clothing and textiles out of nineteen universities in south-eastern Nigerian universities as at the time of carrying out the research. The population of the study was 400 which was made of two categories of respondents. The first category comprised of 340 final year students offering either Home Economics, Home science or textile major/fashion and designing students in Fine and Applied arts in the five universities. The second category was made up of all the 60 lecturers in the clothing and textile units of Home economics, textiles unit of fine and applied arts and Home Science departments of the five universities. The entire population was used because the population is of a manageable size. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. It was designed into Group A and Group B. Group A had items with two categories of response scales of possessed and needed. The possessed category scale had four point response scales of highly possessed (HP), averagely possessed (AV), slightly possessed (SP), not possessed (NP), which was meant to determine the extent of the skills in appliqué possessed by Home-

Economic students. The needed category scale had four point response scale of highly needed (HN), averagely needed (AN), slightly needed (SN), not needed(NN), designed to seek information on the extent skills in appliqué are needed by Home-economics students. All these four point response scales had corresponding nominal values of 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. Group B had items with 4 point scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagrees (SD) designed to seek information on ways appliquéing skills of home-economics students can be improved. The response scales had nominal values of 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, and its reliability coefficients obtained through Cronbach alpha formular were 0.82 and 0.72 for the skills in applique possessed and needed category respectively, 0.54 for the opinion on problems encountered by Home-Economics students in acquiring skills in applique and 0.65 for ways the problems encountered by home economics students in acquiring skills in applique can be solved. The data was analyzed using mean and mean differences to answer research

question one, while mean and frequency was used to answer research questions two and three. In taking decision, for research question one, the following steps were followed:

- ➢ Weighted mean value of each of the item of extent of applique skills possessed by Home economics students (Xp) was calculated and the weighted mean value of each of the item of extent of applique skills needed (Xn) was calculated.
- ➢ The calculated mean difference (Xd) which is the difference between Xn and Xp was used for decision making. Thus;
  - • Where (Xd) is positive (+), it means that Xn is greater than Xp. Thus the printing skill is needed.
  - • Where (Xd) is negetaive (-) it means that Xn is lesser than Xp. Thus, the applique skill is not needed.
  - • Where (Xd) is 0, it means that the skill is not possessed nor needed by Home-economics students.

In taking decision for research questions two and three, mean and standard deviation was gotten using SPSS 20.0.Mean rating of 2.50 was used in taking decision. Items with mean rating of 2.50 and above was upheld while items with mean ratings of 2.49 and below was not be upheld.

Results

The results of the study were obtained from the analysis of the data for the research questions. The results are presented in tables as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the skills in appliqué possessed and needed by home-economics students in Universities in South-East Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean response on the skills in appliqué possessed and needed by Home Economics students in South East Nigeria Universities

s/n	Appliquéing Skills	Xn	Xp	Xd=Xn-Xp	Remark
1.	Hand appliqué using paper template	1.82	3.86	-2.04	NN
2.	Use of patch-work for appliqué	1.48	3.66	-2.18	NN
3.	Hand appliqué using a stabilizer	3.95	1.55	2.40	SN
4.	Reverse appliqué	1.53	3.65	-2.12	NN
5.	Use embroidery for appliqué	1.50	3.57	-2.07	NN
6.	Cutting skill	1.43	3.57	-2.14	NN
7.	Needle turn appliqué using a freezer Paper	3.70	1.48	2.22	SN
8.	Naïve appliqué using fusible web and button hole stitch	3.70	1.24	2.46	SN

N = 340

SOURCE: Field Study 2016   NN means Not Needed   SN means Skill Needed

The data presented in table 1 revealed that the mean responses of the skills in appliqué possessed by Home-Economics students' ranged from 1.24 to 3.86, while the mean responses of appliquéing skills needed by Home-economics students ranged from 1.43 to 3.95. The value of the mean differences (Xd) for skills possessed ranged from -2.18 to -2.04. The value of the mean differences (Xd) for appliquéing skills needed ranged from 2.22 to 2.46. Since three skills have their values of Xd positive and five skills have theirs negative, it means that Home-Economics students need three skills out of eight identified appliquéing skills.

Research Question 2: What are the hindrances to acquiring skills in appliqué ?

Table 2: Mean response of the lecturers on the hindrances to acquiring these appliquéing skills by Home economics students in Southeast Nigeria, Universities?

s/n	Items	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Inadequate basic fabric decoration equipment, tools and fabrics in the laboratories	3.75	0.437	Agreed
2	Not using the supposed appropriate method of teaching practical	3.72	0.454	Agreed
3	Insufficient number of lecturers in the areas of clothing and textiles	3.36	0.537	Agreed
4	Lack of resourcefulness or innovation by clothing and textiles lecturers	3.53	0.536	Agreed
5	Rigidity of the lecturer	3.42	0.530	Agreed
6	Poor enterprise culture	3.83	0.524	Agreed
7	Discouragement of anything outside the prescribed pattern	3.75	0.437	Agreed
8	Lack of seed money for practical	3.42	0.743	Agreed
9	Non-inclusion of a well-planned industrial training for the student in the curriculum	3.21	0.691	Agreed
N=60				

Source; Field study 2016**.**

In table 2 above, the data thereof revealed that all the items have their mean values ranged from 3.21 to 3.83 and therefore are above 2.50 which is the cutoff point. Thus, all the items revealed are upheld are some of the hindrances to acquiring applique skills by Home-Economics students.

Research Question 3: What are ways of curbing these hindrances to improve students' skill acquisition in appliqué?

Table 3: Mean response of the lecturers on the ways these hindrances to acquiring these appliquéing skills by Home economics students in Southeast Nigeria, Universities can be solved?

s/n	Items	$\overline{\mathrm{X}}$	SD	Remarks
1	Provision of infrastructural facilities/textiles items	3.75	0.427	Agreed
2	Employing more specialists in clothing and textiles area to handle the difficult areas	3.72	0.454	Agreed
3	Use of demonstration technique in teaching clothing and textiles aspects	3.50	0.537	Agreed
4	Organizing conferences, seminars and workshops for upgrading knowledge and skills for students and lecturers	3.33	0.536	Agreed
5	Sending students an real/ actual industrial training	3.42	0.530	Agreed
6	Embracing innovation	3.38	0.523	Agreed
7	In-service training of clothing and textiles lecturers	3.75	0.437	Agreed
8	Research	3.42	0,734	Agreed
9	Improvisation	3.22	0.691	Agreed
10	Improved school-industry relationship	3.77	0.427	Agreed
11	Advocacy	3.65	0.481	Agreed
12	Exhibition	3.57	0.500	Agreed
13	Marketing of products to encourage students	3.42	0.530	Agreed
	N=60			

Source: field study 2016.

The data in table 3 above revealed that all the items have their mean ranges from 3.22 to 3.77 and therefore are all above 2.50 which is the cutoff point. Thus, all the items are upheld as ways of curbing hindrances towards achieving improved applique skills.

Discussion of Findings

The collected data to answer research question 1 show that home-economics students need improvement in appliquéing skills. The data summarized in Table 1 showed that out of eight appliquéing skills identified, five appliquéing skills having mean differences ranging from -2.18 to -2.04 thus are possessed by home-economics students, while three appliquéing skills have their mean differences ranging from 2.22 to 2.46 thus are needed by Home-economics students. This is in line with Chan-klin (2014), who asserted that the current environment is plenty of rapid technological and media advancement. Thus, students should be made to keep abreast of those technological changes for self -reliance, self- sufficient and become employable. (Asuquo, 2007) in Nwaokaomah (2010) asserted that vocational and technical education in which clothing and textiles education falls into

requires a lot of physical equipment and other infrastructure to thrive. Hence from these it can be deduced that possibly, those skills in appliqué possessed by the students are probably because of available resources while there is need to provide the equipment needed for those skills in appliqué needed by the students.

The analysis of data for research question 2 depicted that the respondents agreed to all the nine factors that can hinder acquisition of applique skills. The mean ranging from 3.21 to 3.83 is above 2.50 which is the decision cutoff point Thus, upholding all the items as factors that can hinder student's applique skill acquisition. This is in line with what several authors found out such as Ewubare (2010), who opined that inadequate facilities and equipment to cope with the number of students stifles acquisition of skills amongst students and also insufficient laboratory

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facilities compels Home Economics teachers/lecturers to use inappropriate methods of teaching and this makes learning delivery difficult. Also, Ozioko (2006), stated that some Home Economics lecturers in tertiary institution do not like the teaching of clothing and textiles. On the issue of lack of seed money for practical, Ewubare (2010), pointed out that inadequate funding of tertiary institutions has often affected the teaching and learning of Home Economics amongst others.

Data analyzed for research question 3 showed that the mean ranging from 3.22 to 3.77 is above the decision cut off point which is 2.5 thus, respondents agreed that all the thirteen ways found out can help in improving Home economics students' fundamental in applique. This is in line with Nwaokaomah (2010), who suggested that students should be encouraged to buy their own equipments for practicals, this can ameliorate the issue of seed for practicals/funding. Ozioko (2006), wrote on improvisation that individuals should discover different ways of using existing resources and materials to produce

completely new or changed revisions of existing goods and services. On the issue of funding, Nwaokaomah (2010), suggested that governmental bodies should assist tertiary institutions in funding the subject area as well as regular maintenance on the existing equipment so as to keep them in continuous working condition for effective learning amongst others.

Conclusion and Recommendation

For self-reliance and employability of home-economics students, there is need for constant improvement on their skill acquisition. In a world that is technologically advancing, for home-economics students to actively participate and efficiently fit into the labour market, there is need for constant review, inclusion of different novel skills and effective use of machines and gadgets to be taught the students, thus, some novel skills in appliqué identified by the study will help boost their dexterity prowess. In line with the findings, it is recommended a well-organized seminars and conferences be made mandatory for home-economics lecturers for them to be kept abreast of the new

technologies their used and operations also, industrial training scheme be mapped out for Home-Economics students so as to bridge the gap between school and industry amongst others.

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