

STUDENTS' INDUSTRIAL WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME (SIWEP): PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

BY

ABDULLAHI MOHAMMED

(abdmhdpot@gmail.com)

Department of Economics,
College of Education and Legal Studies,
P.M.B. 002 Nguru, Yobe State.

Abstract

This paper looked at the problems militating against the Students' Industrial Work Experience Programme (SIWEP). SIWEP is a programme designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice in such disciplines as engineering technology and allied disciplines in higher institutions of learning. The paper also discussed the roles of Federal Government, National Universities Commission (NUC), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), employers, universities, and students. The paper also highlighted inadequate/poor orientation of students, poor supervision, wrong placement, noncooperation of some industrial workers, and non-seriousness on the part of students as the major problems militating against the scheme. Appropriate guidelines to be adopted in solving these problems were also recommended by the paper.

Keywords: Problems, Students, Industrial Work Experience Programme (SIWEP)

Introduction

Industrial work experience scheme is important in every practical based academic training. According to Ogbonnaya (2017) it is aimed at harmonizing the theoretical knowledge obtained in the classroom with practical experience. This enables any nation to build a strong technological base. Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) according to Oyeniyi (2011) is a programme designed to expose and prepare students of institutions of higher learning for industrial work situation which they are likely to meet after graduation. Indeed, without proper application of theoretical knowledge, no nation can boast of a strong science and technological base. The importance of industrial training in Nigeria led to the enactment of Decree 47 of 1971. The Decree established the Industrial Training Fund (ITF). ITF became the first Nigerian federal government parastatals established and charged with the responsibility of developing highly skilled manpower for the nation. As the Fund pursued the policy guidelines through its operations in the industry, it discovered a serious lack of practical skills of the indigenously trained engineers and

technologists. It discovered that there is a big gap between theory and practice of practically inclined courses. Hence, in 1973, the Industrial Training Fund initiated the Students Industrial Work Experience Programme (SIWEP). SIWEP was initiated to help bridge the gap between theory and practice. It was designed to complement the efforts of the higher institutions produce graduates that are theoretically sound, technologically balanced and practically oriented (Aroh, 2016). Industrial Training has been applied by many countries of the world to develop their technological base. For instance, in the United State, the programme, according to Mason, Haines, and Furthado (2015), is known with various names as "Internship, cooperative educational experience, work study, etc." The effect of such training cannot be over emphasized. Anthony (1981), observed that the success of each of the programmes is measured by the positive response of the students and the attitude of employers, who, in most cases hire them later. Likewise, in the U.K. the industrial training programmes, outside the usual internship for professionals, are organized under the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) launched in 1983 by the

Manpower Service Commission (MSC) with increased scope to cater for more categories of youths (Comfort, Taylor and Varelids, 1983, as quoted by Okonkwo 1996). The British government initiated the programme because she believes that the participants will be more qualified when they have opportunity of trying things out and making discoveries for themselves.

Furthermore, Ojokutu, Emeahora, Aboyade and Chris-Israel (2015) stressed that the programme (SIWES) is a planned, supervised training and intervention programme based on stated and specific learning and career objectives, leading to the development of occupational competencies of the participants. Nevertheless, the efforts of government through her agency (ITF) seem not to have achieved the desired results. This paper is aimed at discussing the problems militating against the success of SIWES.

Aims of SIWEP

The aims of SIWEP are to provide avenue for students to acquire industrial skill and experience in the approved course of study. Prepare students for their industrial work situation which is likely to meet after graduation (Ogbonnaya, 2017).

Objectives of SIWEP

The Students Industrial Work Experience Programme (SIWEP) was initiated by the ITF in 1973. SIWEP was designed and initiated by the ITF to bridge the gap between theory and practice in such disciplines as Engineering, Technology and other allied disciplines in Higher Institutions of learning. The scheme was set up with the following aims:

- i. To complement the tertiary institutions in the provision of adequately trained manpower.
- ii. To complement the institutions in improving indigenous technology.
- iii. To prepare students for work situations they may likely meet after graduation.

- iv. To enable students put their theoretical knowledge into practice.
- v. To enable the students on return to their institutions, strike a balance between their practical experiences and their theoretical knowledge.
- vi. To give room to employers of labour to make their own input into the nation's educational process.

Importance of SIWEP

- i. It provides students opportunity to apply their knowledge in real life situation
- ii. It exposes students to more work methods and techniques.
- iii. It strengthens links bet employers, universities and training fund (ITF)
- iv. It also prepares the student for labour market after graduation (Adeyemi, 2016).

The Role of Federal Government

- i. Make it mandatory for ministries, companies and government parastatals, to offer attachment places students
- ii. Make it a policy to include clause in every major contract lasting over six to nine months being award for contractors to take student attachment
- iii. Make adequate funds available to the federal ministry of industry to fund the Scheme (Adeyemi, 2016).

Some of the Role of Industrial Training Fund (ITF)

- i. Provide logistic material administer the scheme;
- ii. Compile lists of employers entraining places for industrial and forward such lists to coordinating agencies (i.e. NCCE) (Adeyemi, 2016).

Role of Employers

- i. Control and discipline permanent staff.
- ii. Accept students and assisting the relevant on-the-job training
- iii. Provide medical care for stud the limits

- of the employer's service during attachment
- iv. Attach experienced staff to effective training and supervisors should not handle ten students at a time;
- v. Pay students monthly allowance when due (Adeyemi, 2016).

Some of the Roles of Educational Institutions (Universities)

- i. Prepare and submit placement lists to the coordinating agency and IT.
- ii. Place students on attach employers
- iii. Establish SIWEP coordinating appoint department/faculty coordinators within the institutions.
- iv. Organize orientation programme students to prepare them for training. ITF representative invited to give a talk to the during the orientation programme
- v. Appoint full-time coordinators to operate the industrial level (Adeyemi, 2016).

The Role of Students

- i. Comply with the employment and regulations
- ii. Arrange their own accommodation during the attachment
- iii. Be regular and punctual at place of attachment Arrange their own accommodation during the attachment (Adeyemi, 2016).

Basic Problems of SIWEP

There are quite some problems that are facing the SIWEP programme. Ikechukwu (2016) stated that SIWES has failed in meeting the practical production skills, attitudes, abilities and competencies required to make Nigeria technological, engineering, business and other vocational education graduates readily employable or to be self-reliant. Some of these problems are discussed below;

1. Improper compilation of Students Master and Placement Lists: this problem occurs

when institutions of learning make their submissions with such" mistakes as duplication of names, matriculation/serial numbers which are faulty and inclusion of students of unaccredited courses.

Sometimes, the schools also fail to submit the summary sheets of placement by course or discipline and by states alongside the Students' Master and Placement lists. Such basic information for processing student's allowance, as duration of attachment is not specified. Therefore, even while funds are available, students cannot be paid during industrial attachment. This is largely due to late submission of relevant documents for payment (i.e. Students' Master and Placement Lists). Although SIWEP operational guidelines specify that all students' placement list should be submitted three months before the commencement of attachment, students' Master and Placement Lists are usually submitted months, and sometimes a year or two after the students have completed the attachment. The above reasons are largely responsible for delays in the payment of student's allowances.

2. Improper, inadequate and inefficient supervision. This is yet another problem encountered in the administration of SIWEP. Supervision is essential for the success of any task. Poor (in some cases, lack of) supervision has greatly affected the success of the scheme. The operational guidelines spell out those three separate officials should supervise students on industrial attachment: an industry-based supervisor, supervisor from the school and another one from the ITF. The industry based supervisor is required to assess the student's progress on a weekly basis and make appropriate comments in their logbooks. On the other hand, the institution-based supervisor is expected to visit at least once every month and monitor the student's progress to ensure that the practical experience being obtained is relevant to the course of study. An official from the ITF is also expected to visit students at least once during industrial attachment, to ensure that they are

actually participating in the scheme, in areas that are relevant to their courses of study. Nevertheless, it has been observed that supervision by the industry-based supervisor is regarded as a mere routine that is not taken with any level of seriousness. Likewise, the institution-based supervisors, who are expected to visit the students at least monthly, are also not faithful in this task. Thus, the institutions cannot ascertain the relevance of knowledge being imparted on the students. Furthermore, the ITF officers who are supposed to visit the students at least once during the training to ascertain their performance, sometimes never visit such students in the industries.

3. Another problem that has affected the SIWEP programme is the unwillingness of various organizations to take students for training. This has affected the number of students that can be placed for training at a given point in time. Although the ITF's enabling act specifies sanctions on corporate organizations and their principal officers for refusal to accept students for industrial attachment, the problem is still persisting. This in part can be attributed to the downturn in the economy that has led to downsizing and in some cases outright closure of industrial organizations. Consequently, in these situations it has been found difficult to place students in organizations where they can acquire the much-needed practical experience. In some instances, students have had to scout for places irrelevant to their course of study thereby defeating the objectives of the scheme. For instance, many engineering students have, out of frustration, found themselves in business management firms. But the question is; of what practical relevance will such an attachment be? On the other hand, consider a business management student that finds himself in a factory where he becomes just a factory worker, doing jobs that are not related to his field. This could be irrelevant to his field. Therefore, corporate organizations should assist in making sure that competent graduates are produced in our society by playing their

role in the training exercise.

4. Lack of accommodation for trainees: Indeed, the first thing that comes, across the mind of every prospective industrial trainee is that of accommodation. This is because the training, most of the time, is not done within the school environs. Hence, the trainee will require getting an accommodation close to the place of attachment. This has led many students to opt for places within their homes. Sometimes, such places may not be of any relevance to them.

5. Unfriendly attitude of other workers: The unfriendly attitude of other workers to industrial trainees has hindered the progress of the scheme. It is rather unfortunate that many workers feel threatened by the presence of industrial trainees. Thus, they fail to relate well with the trainees. Such workers need to be re-orientated. This is because both the trainee and the other workers are fighting a common course; hence, need not fight one another.

6. Inadequate orientation of students: Many students have a wrong mind-set of what industrial training is all about. How far industrial training will enhance one's carrier potentials depends so much on one's attitude and conception of the meaning of industrial training. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the various conceptions of the programme by students. Nevertheless, these conceptions are all erroneous. Students are therefore encouraged to develop the right attitude towards the programme. The problem of inadequate orientation has led to misconception* of the aims of the scheme by such students. This has grossly affected the success of the scheme. For instance, many students have taken the time as a holiday period. Anosike, as quoted in Aroh (2000), emphasized that it is not a holiday resort neither is it a vocational job. It is not a time to sleep away time. It forms part of the academic training of the students. The students therefore need to be properly informed. Furthermore, improper orientation has also made some students see the programme as

money making venture (Ogbonnaya, 2017). Hence all that interests such students is how much money (cash) they can get from such an industry rather than how much of relevant experience that can be acquired.

7. The attitude of students towards industrial training: Indeed, the programme has been designed to satisfy a need. But what need does the student see the programme to satisfy. The programme may never succeed until the students have a right perception of what need it has been designed to satisfy. Every establishment that is organized has some rules and regulations that govern its existence and management. An industry with no defined set of guiding principles for her members is one that is poised to agonize. Principles and ideals make up code of ethics. The issue of ethics in every organization cannot be over-emphasized. Indeed, there will be chaos in the absence of work ethics, and no meaningful development can occur in an atmosphere of chaos.

Nevertheless, it is rather unfortunate that many industrial trainees do not observe some basic work ethics. Every industrial trainee ought to be familiar with and consistently apply the ethics in the particular profession he/she is practicing or is about to practice. Success in one's assignment is not only determined by brilliance and intelligence, one's attitude to the observance of the code of ethics of the industry is cordially integral in one's competence assessment test. Success in any career, more than incontrovertible proofs of competence and proficiency, requires simple observance of the all-important yet much abused work attitudes (Ogbonnaya, 2017).

Conclusion

Nigeria is yet to really feel the impact of SIWEP. It was established so as to bring about technological development. It was established in order to bring a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. Technological, and indeed any other form of education, will not be complete

if the known theories cannot be demonstrated practically. Hence, there is the need for industrial training.

Incompetency in our industries is a result of the quality of training received by the workers. Some workers have a sound theoretical knowledge but do not have the exposure to practice such knowledge. Thus, they become incompetent. I am of the opinion that through proper supervision, orientation, provision of basic logistics, etc the objectives of SIWEP will be achieved. This in turn will ensure that the quality of graduates turned out from our schools will greatly improve.

Recommendations

The Students Industrial Work Experience Programme (SIWEP) has over the years worked towards achieving the set goals. However, the stakeholders in the programme need to put in more effort so as to fully achieve the set goals. It is therefore believed that the following recommendations, if implemented, will go a long way in ensuring the success of the programme.

1. The institutions should endeavor to submit their master and placement lists to ITF on time. Such lists should also be checked before submission for any errors.
2. The issue of supervision should be taken with more seriousness.
3. Actions should be taken against organizations that refuse to take students for industrial training.
4. Organizations should also be made to provide accommodation for their trainees.
5. There should also be a proper orientation for other industrial workers so as to create a cordial relationship with the trainees.
6. There should be proper/adequate orientation of students on the objectives of SIWEP before such students go for industrial training.
7. The placement of students should also be properly carried out so as to ensure that the student would obtain relevant experiences.
8. Students on industrial training should endeavor to comply with the ethics of the

organization so as to make the maximum use of the opportunity.

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