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Evaluation of Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Library School: The Federal Polytechnic Nekede Experience

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Introduction

The Federal Polytechnic Nekede was established in 1978 by Edict No 16 of the then Imo State Government enacted by the Col. Sunday Adenihu government. The Imo State Government amended the Edict establishing the institution in 1987 and renamed it, the Polytechnic Nekede. However, the ownership and management of the institution was taken over from the Imo State Government on the 7th April, 1993 by the Federal Government of Nigeria after which it became Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri.

The Department of Library and Information Science, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, was established in 1979. The first set of students was admitted in the year 1980/1981 academic session. In the academic session of 1985/1986, the maiden National Diploma and Higher National Diploma (HND) Programmes in Library Science were accredited. As of date, the Library and Information Science department of Federal Polytechnic Nekede runs both HND and ND Programmes in regular, evening and week-end Programmes of the School.

Industrial training for Library and Information Science student is of paramount importance. The students are expected to acquire adequate and relevant skills that would enable them to perform effectively in their future place of work or assignment. In spite of the high level of quality and qualified Library Science educators in Nigeria library schools, there are still gaps in both the theoretical and practical knowledge acquired by the students. As noted by Ugwu (2010), there is a serious need to give effective education and training to Library and Information professionals for improved service delivery to the society.

The quality of service rendered in the library is in proportion to the level of knowledge and skills possessed by the library staff and it is a fact that today

library science students are the librarians of tomorrow, and if effective service delivery should be expected from them, it is imperative that they are given adequate opportunities to acquire an all round skills. The Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) therefore is aimed at giving the students the opportunity to relate and translate their theoretical knowledge to the real world of work.

Objectives of the Study

The study generally is aimed at evaluating the students' Industrial work Experience Scheme in the library school, Federal Polytechnic Nekede.

The specific objectives are:

1. To determine if library science students under study do participate effectively in the SIWES Programme.
2. To ascertain if the students who participated were really attached to organizations related to their field of study.
3. To identify the specific organizations that the students under study were mostly attached.
4. To establish the extent the knowledge acquired during the SIWES Programme were relevant to their course of study.
5. To identify the limitations to the actualization of the objectives of SIWES Programme.

Literature Review

Training according to Ajidahun (2007) is an integral part of vocational or career development and it is fast becoming a global and pervasive phenomenon in any establishments, the absence of which spells doom for such an institution and the presence of which determines the success of any enterprise. In the view of Ezeali and Esiagu (2009), training is an organized, coordinated development of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by an industrial worker to master a given situation or perform a certain task within an organization setting. They further stressed that training should not limited to work environment is necessary.

Ukwuoma and Akanwa (2008) citing Robinson (1998) observed that effective training brings about an increase in knowledge required in the job, knowledge of the structure and business arms of the organization. This implies that the knowledge base of the Practitioner increases in Proportion to the training acquired. Therefore, the role that training can play in human resource development as aptly capture by Ajidahun (2007) in Libraries and Information System is inestimable and unquantifiable. Training is a key factor in enhancing the efficiency and expertise of the workforce.

The Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) was established by ITF in 1973 to solve the problem of lack of adequate practical skills preparatory for employment in industries by Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions. The SIWES Programmes according to Onwuji (2004) being a skills acquisition programme blends theory with practice in the industrial and commercial activities of our national economy.

Ugwuamji (2010) asserts that SIWES is a cooperative industrial internship program that involves institutions of higher leaning, Industries, the Federal government of Nigeria, Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) and NBTE/NCCEE in Nigeria.

The scheme affords students the opportunity of familiarizing and exposing themselves to the needed experience in handling equipment and machinery that are usually not available in their institutions. Thus, the students' industrial work experience scheme generally referred to I.T (Industrial Attachment) is an initiative of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) that provides avenues for student in institutions of higher learning to acquire practical skills that they are likely to meet after graduation.

However, Wodi and Dokubo (2009) opined that if the Scheme is not adequately implemented, it becomes difficult for graduates of the system to secure employment in the occupations or make a smooth transition from schools to work. They conclude that in spite of apparent economic difficulty, the SIWES in Nigerian institutions are attaining its objectives. Nevertheless, SIWES plays a significant role in human resource development in Nigeria and students according to Ugwuamji (2009) should be aware of what the present society holds for them and adapt accordingly.

Method

The survey approach was adopted and the population of the study comprises of both the National Diploma Students of the first year, selected randomly from the regular programme, evening programme and week-end programme as well. The respondents participated in the SIWES exercise between 2010 and January 2011. A total of one hundred and fifteen (115) questionnaires were administered and were all retrieved back, the data collected were analyzed using simple frequency counts and percentages.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Participation of students in the SIWES programme between October 2010 – January 2011.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	115	100
No	-	-
Total	115	100

In table 1, all the respondents (100%) confirmed that they participated effectively in the SIWES programme organized between October 2010 and January, 2011. This shows that the students are aware of the relevance of the SIWES programme to their academic pursuits.

Table 2: Results on if organization attached to is related to their area of study

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	94	81.7
No	21	18.3
Total	115	100

In table 2, 94 (81.7%) confirmed that the organization they were attached to were related to their area of study, while 21 (18.3%) reveals that where they were attached to was not relevant to their area of study. This shows that majority of the students were fully absorbed in areas related to their field of study.

Table 3: Organization attached to

	Frequency	Percentage
Libraries	16	13.9
Cyber cafes/computer business centres	56	48.7
Publishing houses	9	7.8
Archive and record centres	8	7
Bookshops	5	4.3
Others	21	18.3
Total	115	100

In table 3, 16 (13.9%) were attached to libraries, 56 (48.7%) to cyber cafes/computer business centres, 9 (7.8%) to publishing houses, 8 (7%) to Archive and Record Centres, 5 (4.3%) to Bookshops and 21 (18.3%) to other organization like construction, manufacturing companies etc. The findings show that majority of the students did their industrial training in cyber cafes/computer business centres with only 16 (13.9%) being attached to libraries. This apparently is nothing to write home about as this is not in consonance with the objective of the SIWES as most of the experience acquired in computer centre will not actually prepare them for actual work situation.

Table 4: Relevance of knowledge/skills acquired to field of study

	Frequency	Percentage
Highly relevance	69	60
Not relevance at all	10	8.7
Average relevance	34	29.6
Undercided	2	1.7
Total	115	100

From table 4, 69 (60%) agreed that the knowledge acquired is highly relevant to their field of study, 10 (8.7%) says it is not relevance at all, 34 (29.6%) indicates average relevance while 2 (1.7%) were undecided.

Therefore, majority of the students acquired knowledge and skills relevant to their

field of study in the course of the training.

Table 5: Specific areas knowledge was mostly gained

	Frequency	Percentage
Cataloging of books	12	10.4
Indexing of documents	10	8.7
Classification	8	7
Reference services	2	1.7
Abstracting services	2	1.7
Others	81	70.5
Total	115	100

From table 5, 12 (10.4%) gained knowledge mostly in the area of cataloging, 10 (8.7%) in the area of indexing of documents, 8 (7%) in the area of classification, 2 (1.7%) in the area of reference services and abstracting services respectively with 81 (70.5%) gaining knowledge in other areas of life.

The findings show that majority of the students did not gain practical knowledge in the core areas of their field of study and this will have an adverse effect on their performance in their future place of work, except they will be given on the job turning. However, most of the students gained knowledge in the area of computer appreciation, internet browsing, printing and publishing.

Table 6: Limitations to actualization of the objectives of SIWES

	Frequency	Percentage
Delay in issuing logbooks/I.T. letters	63	54.8
Refusal to accept students by organizations	75	65.2
Lack of motivational incentives	23	20
Lack of proper coordination/supervision	97	84.3
Non-cooperative attitude between staff and I.T students multiple option	15	13

From table 6, 63 (54.8%) affirmed delay in issuing of log book/I.T letters as a factor, 75 (65.2%) sees refusal to accept students by various organizations/industries as a factor, 23 (20%) indicates lack of motivational incentives, 97 (84.3) says, it is lack of proper coordination/supervision with 15 (13%) indicating non-cooperative attitude between staff and the students attached. The analysis shows that the major limitations to the actualization of the objectives of SIWES programme are: lack of proper coordination and supervision of the

SIWES exercise, refusal to accept students by industries/various organizations as well as delay in issuing log books and I.T letters.

Summary of Findings

This study evaluated the SIWES programme carried out in the library school of Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri Nigeria. The study explored the relevance of the scheme as well as the factors limiting the actualization of the SIWES objectives. However, the following findings were made from the study:

1. That the students in the library school participated effectively in the 2010-2011 SIWES programme and that majority of the students were absorbed in the areas related to their course of study.
2. That majority of the student did their industrial training in cyber cafes, computer business centres and information centres.
3. That the skills and knowledge acquired by the students to some extent are highly relevant to their area of study.
4. The students gained practical knowledge mostly outside the core functions of library services. Computer appreciation skills, internet browsing skills amongst others were the skills/knowledge mostly acquired in the course of the training.
5. The factors limiting the effective actualization of the objectives of SIWES were identified and they includes: lack of proper coordination and supervision of the SIWES exercise, refusal to absorbed students by industries as well as delay in issuing of log books and I.T. letters.

Conclusion

From the evaluation so far, there seems to exist a wide margin in the reality and actualization of the objectives of the students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES). It is disheartening to note that lack of proper coordination and supervision of the exercise is a factor limiting the full actualization of the objectives of the SIWES, this however, implies that for the students to be fully equipped with skills/knowledge required for efficiency in the place of work all hands must be on deck. The federal government through the industrial training fund and other agencies involved in the SIWES programme should wake up and address the situation to ensure that the loopholes in the system are covered.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were based on the findings of the study and as a solution to the identified problems.

- i. **PROPER COORDINATION AND SUPERVISION OF THE EXERCISE:** The various bodies involved in the management of the SIWES exercise i.e. Federal Government, Industrial Training Fund (ITF), NUC, NBTE and NCCE should come together and fashion out a modality that will ensure smooth operation of the SIWES exercise. Efforts should be made to ensure that students attached to the organization are properly supervised to ensure that what they are doing is inline with the objectives of the SIWES exercise.
- ii. The various bodies involved in the management of the SIWES programmes should liaise with the various industries ahead of tune so as to minimize or reduce to the barest minimum the high level of refusal to accept students for their industrial training participation.
- iii. **ISSUING OF LOG BOOKS/IT LETTERS ON TIME:** The log books used by the

student during the industrial training period and the IT letters should be issued to the students at the end of the first semester exam as against the end of second semester examination as this will afford the students enough time to search for place that are relevant to their field of study.

iv. EMPLOYMENT OF EXPERTS: The various institutions should endeavour to employ experts in the areas of career development to manage the student's industrial placement centres.

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