

CHALLENGES OF SIWES AS A TOOL IN TVET WORKPLACE PARTNERSHIP FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract

SIWES plays an important role in making education relevant by bridging the gap between theory and practice. As such, it is a tool in achieving TVET workplace partnership. This paper examines the concept, curriculum, and objectives of TVET and SIWES. It reveals the role of SIWES in TVET workplace partnership, the challenges faced by SIWES in meeting its goals and the strategies for overcoming the challenges. Recommendations were also made.

Introduction

National development is the capability of a nation to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of the people by providing social amenities such as good education, employment, infrastructure, security and social services (Caleb, Nsini and Hart, 2012). Thus, when a country wants to pursue a national development plan, she can do so using operational programs such as focus on economic and social infrastructure, the productive sector, employment and human resources.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), is geared towards national development. It comprises formal, non-formal and informal learning aimed at the provision of skills, knowledge, attitude and values needed for the world of work (UNESCO, 2010).

Thus, skill development is very important in the development of any nation and skill acquisition is a sine qua non for manpower development as well as economic empowerment (Nchekwube, 2007). When you equip an individual with skills, you empower him to be employable and play his role in developing the economy of his country. Therefore, no realistic headway in national development can be achieved without

exposing the citizens to the necessary skills required.

Skill development is an important function of educational institutions especially tertiary institutions because the greater proportion of the nation's workforce is produced by these institutions. In consideration of this (skill development as an important function of education), the federal government of Nigeria introduced the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) into the educational system, to expose and prepare students in institutions of higher learning for industrial working situations they are likely to meet after graduation (Ogbonnaya, 2006).

In the light of this, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions through SIWES, liaise with industries, organizations, companies or establishments, to give students the opportunity of acquiring practical skills and the right attitudes relevant to their discipline, which will be saleable after their graduation.

Despite government's effort to encourage skill acquisition by students through the provision of SIWES, a good number of graduates from tertiary institutions remain unemployed for years after graduation due to the fact that they

lack marketable or saleable skills which will make them get employable in the world of work. In confirmation of this, Akpabio (2014) in discussing hunger in Nigeria emphatically stated that our universities turn out fresh graduates into the labour market with no skill or vocational expertise, a situation which leads to increased unemployment.

The questions to be answered therefore include: Is the curriculum of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) no more relevant? What happened to the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), since the aim of establishing it was to make education more relevant by bridging the gap between theory and practice?

As a result of this, this paper therefore reviews the curriculum, aims and objectives of TVET, and SIWES, the place of SIWES in helping TVET workplace partnership, the challenges faced by SIWES in achieving its goals and objectives, and the ways of strengthening SIWES for the purpose of achieving TVET Workplace partnership for national development of our country.

Concept, Curriculum and goals of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)
Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) are those aspects of the education process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. In addition, it is an educational training which has been designed technically and systematically to accommodate both the trainer and the trainee in order to enable most importantly the trainee acquire the basic knowledge, skills, abilities, understanding and attitudes needed for one's

efficient performance in his/her chosen occupational development.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curriculum focus not only on the educational process but also on the tangible result of that process. Within this context, Technical and Vocational Education and Training curriculum may be perceived as being rather global in nature and representing a broad range of educational activities and experiences. Technical Vocational Education and Training curriculum is the totality of the experiences, knowledge, skills and activities systematically planned to educate the students for gainful employment (Adenle and Shobowale, 2009). This implies that it is a programme which equips the recipients with practical and manipulative skills and basic scientific knowledge to enable them serve the society appropriately. Thus, in response to the question raised in the background about the curriculum of TVET, one can say that the curriculum has no problem.

The goals and objectives of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as Obanya (2005) outlined include:

1. To provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and businesses particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
2. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
3. To produce people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of the environment.

Concept, Aim and Objectives of Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES).
Students' Industrial work Experience (SIWES) is a skill training programme designed by the

Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to prepare students in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria for industrial working situations they are likely to meet after graduation. It was established in 1973 to solve the problem of lack of adequate practical skills preparatory for employment in industries by Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions.

In the earlier stage of science and technology education in Nigeria, students were graduating from their respective institutions without any technical knowledge or working experience. It was in this view that students undergoing science and technology related courses were mandated for in different institutions in view of widening their horizons so as to enable them have technical knowledge or working experiences before graduating from their various institutions.

Thus SIWES is a skill development programme designed to prepare students of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education for transition from the college environment to work (Akerejola, 2008). The goal of SIWES is to promote industrialization in Nigeria and an avenue between the world of teaching, learning, industry and work.

The objectives of SIWES as outlined by Okorie (2000) are as follows:

1. To provide the avenue for students in institutions of higher learning to acquire industrial skills and experiences in their course of study, especially in engineering and applied field.
2. To prepare students for the working situation they are to meet after graduation.
3. To expose students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in education institutions.

4. To make transition from school to world of work easier and enhance students' contact for later job placement.
5. To provide students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real world practices.

SIWES is a tripartite programme involving the students, the universities and industries. It is funded by the federal government of Nigeria and jointly co-ordinated by the ITF and the National Universities Commission (NUC).

The place of SIWES in TVET workplace partnership

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is driven by the demand for employment. This is the demand by enterprises for a skilled workforce to support economic growth. As technology advances in today's workplace, there is an increasing demand for well-trained workers. If TVET graduates are not acceptable to enterprise and are not hired by enterprises, the system has failed. For this reason, TVET must be partnership based.

Partnership can exist in many forms viz formal and informal, public or private, large or small, individual or organizational. It involves close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities. In order for partnership to be successful, both parties have to cooperate with one another and share the successes and the challenges that occur over the course of the partnership.

Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) simply called Industrial Attachment plays a big role in TVET delivery. Industrial Attachment or SIWES involves the formal placement of trainees in the workplace to facilitate the achievement of specific learning outcomes that would potentially lead to their employability on completion of a training programme. Industrial Attachment typically involve training providers and industries (through employers) forming

partnerships to offer situated learning opportunities in the workplace so that learners and TVET practitioners have access to authentic experiences that only the workplace can offer. Thus, the place of SIWES in TVET workplace partnership cannot be overemphasized.

The challenges facing SIWES

Government has recognized the importance of SIWES through the establishment of Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1971 charging ITF with human resource development and training. Following this, SIWES commenced in 1974 and since then till date, hundreds and thousands of students from the various institutions of higher learning- universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, participate in industrial attachment exercise yearly. Despite this, these students graduate looking for white collar jobs. This shows that something is wrong somewhere. In the light of this and as a participator in Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), it is important to communicate across the observed challenges facing and hindering SIWES from meeting its goals. These challenges include:

1. Inadequate viable industries/companies/establishments where the student can be attached for training. This has impacted negatively on the scheme as institutions find it increasingly difficult to secure placement for students in industries where they could acquire the much needed practical experience. Most industries in Nigeria today are operating below installed capacity while others are completely shut down.
2. Student's negative attitude to industrial training scheme. Majority of students who are the chief beneficiaries of the scheme have very poor conception and attitude about the whole exercise. Many see it as first a pre-condition for the

award of an academic certificate and not a determinant of his/her future usefulness in life. As such, many students use the industrial training period to scout for money for supporting himself on getting back to school. Some even dodge the exercise and connive with any establishment to sign the IT form on payment of some money. This frustrates the whole purpose of the scheme.

3. Inadequate/poor supervision of students on industrial training. This poses a big hindrance to SIWES. In most cases, the supervision of students on attachment by staff of institutions, ITF, and employers of labour (industrial based supervisors) is usually very poor. Many factors such as delay or non payment of supervision allowance to staff, lack of incentive to the industry-based supervisor, etc contribute to poor supervision of students on industrial training. Poor supervision also leads to truancy and non-seriousness of the student towards the whole exercise.
4. Inadequate funding. Insufficient fund for the smooth management of the scheme is a big hindrance. The number of institutions and students participating in SIWES has been on the increase in funding of the scheme. Even some institutional SIWES unit coordinators have nothing to run the unit.
5. Wrong choice of establishment by the students. The idea of institutions leaving students to choose establishment for industrial training gives room for loop holes. In this case too, the major factor determining acceptance of student for SIWES by an organisation/establishment is availability of vacancy. Where meaningful organizations/establishments declare

‘no vacancy’, the student resorts to ‘anything’, just to fulfil all righteousness.

6. Unwillingness or lack of commitment by companies/establishment staff to expose the students to the required skills and training needed. Sometimes, the company or industry staff is not well informed or lacks understanding of the part expected of him/her to play. In addition, some reserve their skill when they feel they have nothing to benefit.

With these challenges, SIWES cannot have a good percentage of success. Student’s participation will keep on not yielding positive result. When such students graduate, lacking in skills, unacceptable to enterprises or inability to meet the requirement of business enterprises in the job market, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) workplace partnership has failed.

The way forward

Having seen the important role that SIWES plays in exposing student to skills, in making education more relevant by bridging the gap between theory and practice and seeing the numerous challenges that compass about it, it’s therefore necessary to do something to encourage the scheme. The following strategies are suggested

1. More industries, companies and factories should be established by the federal government and other non governmental agencies and organisations.
2. Choice and placement of students in industry should be strictly left in the hands of the institutions
3. Incentives should be given to industries for accepting students for training
4. Prompt payment of supervision allowance to supervisors is necessary. ITF allowance given to students should

be increased and paid monthly instead of leaving it at the end which may delay

5. SIWES should be properly presented to potential sponsors such as banks, multinational companies and other corporate institutions for support in creating placement opportunities, training, equipment, facilities as well as direct funding of SIWES.

Conclusion

SIWES provides avenue for students to acquire industrial skills and experiences in their approved course of study and so prepares them for their industrial work situation after graduation. It is an indispensable tool in the hands of TVET in equipping people with vocational skill, knowledge and attitude needed for economic independence. Considering its importance, its success should be the concern of all. It calls for the efficiency of the ministries, ITF, institutions, employers of labour, and the general public involved in the articulation and management of the programme.

Recommendations

1. The federal ministry of science and technology, the federal ministry of labour and productivity, Education Trust Fund, Millennium Development Goals, of the presidency should all be involved as major stakeholders that will handle the responsibility of formulating policies to guide the operation of the scheme and advice the federal government appropriately on funding the scheme.
2. There should be time and forum for pre and post industrial training conference involving ITF, institutions, employers of labour (industry, companies, organisations), the coordinating agencies’ representatives or staff, and students, to discuss the issues involved

in the whole exercise. This will infuse the spirit of commitment in all.

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