

APPRAISAL OF TVET PARTNERSHIP FOR WORK-BASED TRAINING OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

BY

¹IFEJIK, L.C., ²HOSEA, I.D. & ³AROWOLO, A.A.

¹&²Department of Business Education

University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria

³Department of Industrial Technical Education

University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria

arobim@gmail.com

Abstract

Office Technology and Management is skill based and the strong emphasis on skills informs the government policy to have TVET institutions partner with industry for skill development. Partnership of TVET institutions for work-based training of their students known as student industrial work experience scheme is the core of technical and vocational education training. This paper appraised the partnership between TVET institutions offering OTM in south east Nigeria and industries. Five (5) polytechnics offering OTM in South East Nigeria were used for the study. The population of the study was made up of 379 HND II students offering OTM in these five institutions. Random sampling was used to select three states out of the five states in South East Nigeria. The states selected are Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu States. The study covered all the federal and state polytechnics that offer Office Technology and Management courses in these three states. The polytechnics offering OTM in these states include; Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana, Ebonyi State; Federal Polytechnic, Oko, Anambra State; and Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, Enugu State. The sample size of the study was 179 HND II students. The students were selected without sampling, as intact classes were used in each of the schools. A structured questionnaire was used in generating data for the study in line with the research questions. The instrument was face validated by three experts from the faculty of Vocational Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In order to determine the internal consistency, the instrument was administered to 35 OTM students of Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo, Imo State. A reliability coefficient of .95 was obtained using the Cronbach alpha. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study indicated that students agreed that the partnership of TVET institutions the industry is relevant and the content of the work based training is related to the OTM courses offered in school. The findings also showed that students find it difficult to secure a place for the industrial work-based learning because relevant industries are not willing to take in the students. The study recommended that relevant industries partnered with, should be inundated with specific number of students they must absolve for work based learning and schools should not leave the responsibility of securing placement for work-based training in the hands of the students alone.

Introduction

Office Technology and Management (OTM) is skill-based. It is a new academic programme replacing the former secretarial studies in Nigeria which seeks to equip its recipients with the relevant knowledge and skills required for practice in this technology driven offices. Office Technology and Management evolved

out of a need to meet the technological and managerial demands of today's workplace in the modern offices. Office technology, according to Oluwakemi and Boluwaji (2014), is the application of scientific knowledge, devices and systems to facilitate and enhance the information processes and delivery of same. The OTM programme is geared toward

building a new generation of secretaries fit for an economy driven by innovation and knowledge, a marketplace engaged in intense competition and constant renewal and a society facing complex business and technological challenges. The need to prepare and make students of secretarial studies competent, skilful and employable in a world of work, which is being driven by technology, is highly imperative.

The OTM curriculum is aimed at producing graduates who would be able to effectively manage the electronic driven office, and who would be equipped with secretarial and office skills for employment in various fields of endeavour (Oludele and Dosunmu, 2013). This level of skills required for professionalism cannot be solely attained within the school walls due to lack of facilities and training equipment. This informs the government policy to have TVET institutions partner with the industry in the provision of training. The students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a skills training programme designed to expose and prepare students of Universities, Polytechnics/Colleges of Technology/Colleges of Agriculture and Colleges of Education for the Industrial Work situation they are likely to meet after graduation. 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 Ugwuanyi (2010), is a partnership between the school and the industry in providing the practical component of training that is lacking from the schools. The partnership 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. Work-Based training is an institutional arrangement where the frontier of the classroom is extended to the work-world.

Okon (2011) views this kind of training as experiential learning programmes that use the work environment as an important component of the curriculum. It provides a formidable link between classroom instruction and the world of work. Ugochukwu (2013) noted that work based training is central to TVET and it offers students the critical opportunity to experience how classroom instruction connects to the world of work and future career prospects as well as job opportunities.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is basically training towards skill acquisition, knowledge and attitude for work. TVET is an occupational education which prepares individuals to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. Partnership with credible organisations to provide innovative work based training has the potential to improve the quality of TVET in Nigeria (Okpor and Hassan, 2012). Eze (1998) points out that government has recognized the importance of SIWES through the establishment of the Industrial Training Fund with the aim of making education more relevant and to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of engineering, technology, and science-related disciplines in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The partnership with the industry is to provide an avenue for students in institutions of higher learning to acquire industrial skills and experiences in their course of study, to provide students with an opportunity to apply their knowledge in real work and actual practice, to make the transition from school to the world of work easier and to enhance students contacts for later job placement. Although, the Federal Government of Nigeria, in response to the need for TVET institutions to partner with relevant industries for the provision of training established the Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), there is a need to appraise this partnership and how much effect it has had on OTM students in the higher education institutions. Oladiran, Benjamin and Aiyelabowo (2012) described this partnership

with industries as the very heart of TVET, it has the advantage of preparing youth for workforce which will lead to rapid development of the country, it develops confidence, personality and increased awareness of one's responsibility as youth in the community by involving in actual work situations. The appraisal of the partnership of TVET institutions offering OTM with industries is highly imperative and would be done by evaluating the perspective of the students to the SIWES programme.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to appraise the quality of TVET partnership for work-based training of OTM students in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the OTM students perceived relevance of the work based training (SIWES)
2. Ascertain the relevance of OTM students' placement for work based training (SIWES) to their course of study?
3. Determine the OTM students ease of placement for work based training (SIWES)

Research Questions

1. What is the OTM students' perceived relevance of the work based training (SIWES)?
2. What is the relevance of OTM students' placement for work based training (SIWES) to their course of study?
3. What is the OTM students' ease of placement for work based training (SIWES)?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. This design was adopted for the study because it enabled the researcher to elicit information from a sample or the entire population, gather information necessary for appraising the quality of TVET partnership with the industry. The population of the study was 379 HND II OTM students in five public

polytechnics offering OTM in south east Nigeria. Random sampling was used to select three states out of the five states in South East Nigeria. The states selected are Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu States of south eastern zone of Nigeria. The study covered all the federal and state polytechnics that offer Office Technology and Management courses in these three states. The polytechnics offering OTM in these states include; Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana, Ebonyi State; Federal Polytechnic, Oko, Anambra State; and Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, Enugu State. The sample size for the study is 179 HND II students made up of 45 OTM students from Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana, Afikpo, Ebonyi State, 85 OTM students from Federal Polytechnic, Oko, Anambra State and 49 OTM students from Institute of Management and Technology Enugu
*Ifejika, L.C, Hosea, I.D.
& Arowolo. A.A*

A structured Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was used to collect data pertaining to research question 1,2 and 3. The questionnaire had 19 items on a five-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. The items of the questionnaire were structured in line with the three research questions. In order to determine the reliability, the instrument was administered to 10 students of OTM in Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo, and a reliability of .94 was obtained. Two research assistants helped to administer the questionnaire, one for Enugu State and the other for Anambra State. All the copies of questionnaire administered to the respondents were retrieved resulting to a 100% return. The data collected were computed based on the research questions. Mean ($\bar{X}$) was used to answer the three research questions. In order to determine the acceptance and rejection of each of the item in the questionnaire, a decision rule based on the real limit of numbers was used. Acceptance level (Agree) is when the mean calculated is 3.00 and

above and the item is rejected (disagree) when the mean calculated is below 3.00.

Research Question 1

What is the OTM students' perceived relevance of the partnership for work based training (SIWES)

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of OTM students' perceived relevance of partnership for work based training (SIWES)

S/No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1	Work based training (SIWES) helps develop interest in OTM	3.83	1.11080	Agree
2	Work based training (SIWES) improves understanding in OTM subjects	3.53	.70544	Agree
3	Work based training (SIWES) helps in exploring of career options	3.55	.84881	Agree
4	Work based training (SIWES) enhances understanding of workplace expectations	3.84	.86641	Agree
5	Work based training (SIWES) enhances awareness of local employment opportunities	3.60	1.15836	Agree
6	Work based training (SIWES) enhances learning of workplace skills relevant to OTM	3.82	.83558	Agree
7	Work based training (SIWES) exposes one to work terminologies and protocol	3.66	1.63853	Agree
8	Work based training (SIWES) exposes one to adult role-models in the industry	3.37	.63565	Agree
9	Work based training helped to apply classroom learning to real work situations	3.03	.80329	Agree
10	Work based training (SIWES) exposes one to state-of-the-art practices and technology	3.54	.72093	Agree
Grand mean		3.58	0.7601	Agree

The data presented in Table 1 show the perceived relevance of the partnership of TVET institutions offering OTM with industries for work based training. The overall mean score of

3.58 showed that the OTM students agree that the existing partnership of TVET institutions for work based training is relevant. The OTM students agree with all the items assessed.

Research question two

What is the relevance of OTM students' placement for work based training (SIWES) to their course of study?

Table 2: Relevance of work based training (SIWES) to these courses offered in OTM

S/No	Item	Mean	Std	Ifejika, L.C, Hosea, I.D. & Arowolo. A.A
11	Shorthand	1.15	.59	
12	Word processing	3.81	.68508	
13.	ICT	3.72	.91812	
14	Entrepreneurship	3.48	.62183	
15	Business communication	3.05	.65578	

Table 2 shows the result of the rating of the OTM students to the subjects offered in OTM. The table revealed that the OTM students agree that the partnership for work-based training is relevant to the subjects, word processing,

entrepreneurship, and business communication with mean scores of 3.81, 3.72, 3.48 and 3.05. The students disagreed with the relevance of the partnership for work-based training to their learning of shorthand.

Research question three

What is the OTM students' ease of placement for work based training (SIWES)?

Table 3:

OTM students' ease of placement for work based training (SIWES)?

S/No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
16	No adequate information on companies that will accept students for work experience.	3.63	.79816	Agree
17	School plays little role in helping student secure placement for SIWES	3.83	1.22773	Agree
18	Relevant industries in OTM rejects students for placement	4.15	.66292	Agree
19.	Student find placement in places irrelevant to the OTM curriculum	4.18	.74026	Agree
	Overall	3.95	0.2644	Agree

The data presented in table 3 shows the findings on the OTM students' ease of placement for work based training (SIWES). The overall mean score of 3.95 reveals that the students agree that it is difficult securing placement for the work based training. All the items assessed are having a mean score of 3.63, 3.83, 4.15 and 4.18 respectively.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study from table 1 indicate that the students agree with the relevance of the partnership of TVET institutions with industries for work based training (SIWES). This agrees with Samson (2011) that work based training plays a very important role in students' academic achievement. The author further stated that work-based training (SIWES) exposes the students to concretize learning and help in understanding abstract concepts. This also agrees with the studies conducted by Gomez, Lush and Clement (2004), Duignan (2003) and Dearing (1997) that students who undertook work placement (SIWES) exhibited improved academic performance.

Finally, the findings on research question one demonstrated that the partnership of TVET institutions with industries improves on the career opportunities of the students because SIWES exposure places the students at a better chance of gaining employment in their industries of choice since they are already trained in those organizations. This is also in agreement with the studies conducted by Bowes and Harvey (2002), Gomez, et al (2004) and Blackwell et al (2001). They equally showed that those students under work placement have better chances of gaining employment. Hence the partnership has the capacity to create job opportunities for students.

The findings presented in table 2 shows that the partnership of TVET institutions offering OTM with industries for work based training is relevant to the OTM subjects offered in the classroom except shorthand. This agrees with the studies conducted by Samson (2011) where he found out that there is a strong relationship between SIWES exposure and classroom setting. This finding disagrees with the studies conducted by Oladiran, Benjamin and Aiyelabowo (2012) in which they posited that

there are disparities between the curriculum contents and experience exposed to during work experience. It could be said that the industry uses modern tools and equipment not easily accessible in the school but the exposure of students to relevant industry is very relevant to the school curriculum content. However, the findings of this study showed that work-based training is irrelevant to the learning of shorthand in the classroom. This also agrees with Cletus (2009) who said shorthand is no longer in use in today's organisations. They noted that new technologies has emerged making shorthand totally irrelevant.

Although the findings for this research has shown how much relevant the partnership of TVET institutions offering OTM is to the students, the finding on Table 3 reveals that students find it difficult securing placement for the work based training. This agrees with the joint studies conducted by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and the University of Jos by Alabi, Eziashi, James-Rugu, Jambol, Best, Dagyat, Alakija and Tambawal (2011) that placement of Students in relevant Industries is a major challenge due to the growing number of Institutions, eligible courses and Students involved in SIWES while many of the relevant industries are shutting down. Thus, the partnership is apt, but relevant industries able to actualise the goal of the partnership are in decline.

*Ifejika, L.C, Hosea, I.D.
& Arowolo, A.A*

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that partnership for work based training of OTM students is highly imperative

for skills development. The study showed that the students perceive the partnership as relevant and important for classroom learning but find it difficult securing placement in relevant industries where the objective of the work based training which is skill development can be acquired. TVET institutions in Nigeria must as a matter of importance hold on to the central government to do more in creation and sustaining of industries so as to mitigate the decline of relevant industries that should build skills capacity for national development.

Recommendations

The findings of this study has shown that the partnership of TVET institutions with industries for work-based training is relevant and imperative for capacity building of students for national development, but students find it difficult in finding placement in industries relevant to OTM. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. SIWES should be properly organized so that students can be appropriately placed in organizations that are related to their course of study.
2. Selection of placement should not be left completely to students. The college should device a means of allocating students to related companies/organizations.
3. Relevant industries for partnership should be inundated with specific number of students they must admit for work based training
4. Shorthand should be replaced with some other skill area in demand by the industry like use of voice captures and editing of recordings.

References

Blackwell, A., Bowes, L., Harvey, L, Hesketh, A. J. and Knight, P.T. (2001). Transforming work experience higher

education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(3) 269-285.

Cletus, E.I (2009). Shorthand in secretarial profession: what relevance in today's Nigerian organization? *Global Academic Group*. Retrieved from

- <http://www.globalacademicgroup.com/journals/academic%20excellence%20/SHORTHAND%20IN%20SECRETARIAL%20PROFESSION.pdf>
- Eze, N.M. (1998). Industrial work experience: A medium for actualizing vision 2010 through home economics education. *Journal of Women in colleges of Education* 2(1) 154-160.
- Gomez, S., Lush D. and Clements, M. (2004). Work placements enhance the academic performance bioscience undergraduates. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 56(3), 373-386.
- Okon, U.E. (2011). Work-Based Learning initiatives. Paper presented at Step-B/World Bank-assisted TVET Teachers Up skilling workshop held at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka from 23rd October – 4th November, 2011.
- Okpor, I., and Hassan, N. (2012). Public-private partnership for skill acquisition and
 Ifejika, L.C, Hosea, I.D.
 & Arowolo. A.A
 Journal of Social Sciences, 5 (4), 51-54
- Oladiran, S.O., Benjamin, O.O., and Aiyelabowo, O.P. (2012). Managing the challenges of industrial work experience scheme in developing workforce among the youths in South-West Nigeria. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 4(2) 330-341
- Oludele L.Y. and Dosunmu J.O. (2013). Effective curriculum implementation: pathway to quality assurance in office technology and management. *Association of Business Educators of Nigeria, Book of Readings*, 3 (1).
- Olukemi, J.O. and Boluwaji, C.E. (2014). Challenges of curriculum development in office technology and management in tertiary institutions. *International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education* 1(3) 483-492
- Samson, O.C. (2011). STUDENTS' perception of the influence of Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) on academic achievement In University of Benin. *Journal of Education, Health and Technology Research*, 1(1) 80– 86
- Ugochukwu, P.N.A (2013). Appraising work-based learning experiences of Technical and Vocational (Teacher) Education and Training (TVTET) programmes In Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 4(5) 137-146
 retrieved from
- Ugwuanyi, E.F. (2010). Challenges of Students' Industrial work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in library and information science in the ICT environment library. Retrieved from <http://www.faqs.org/periodicals>

