

STUDENTS' APPRAISAL OF THE SIWES SCHEME IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper stresses that administering education is the art and science of a systematic and careful arrangement of the resources (human and material including their constraints) available for the achievement of national objectives. Hence, this paper contends that in a recessive economy such as that of Nigeria, there is the need for all stakeholders in education to resort to practical measures to match teaching and learning situations in all tiers of education systems. In doing this, this paper highlights some inherent problems in education delivery which make graduates to become more bookish in place of skills competencies, and this is the reason why unemployment is soaring by leaps and bounds every year. Such problems include: poor implementation of all levels of educational programmes, wide-scale corruption, poor funding, poor provision of electricity power supply, among others. Therefore, the paper recommends that Nigerian citizens should abhor all forms of corruption, provide adequate and purposeful funding of education, turning around good electricity power supply, including others.

Introduction

Business-education is a profitable option of vocational education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It has become a popular vocational programme among students of tertiary institutions in the country. Okoh (1999:126), stressed that business education is that part of vocational education which enables students to learn successfully how to carry on a gainful occupation, and therefore, it has become a functional and utilitarian form of modern education.

Adeshina (2003), opined that business education is a programme designed to develop - special competencies in accounting, marketing, secretarial, clerical and distributive occupations. This is the reason why business education is expected to achieve the goal of production of man power that possess the required knowledge, skills and attitudes for interpreting other resources and bring 'them'-into cooperative relationship which satisfies the goods and services demanded by the society in an environment or nation.

Also, business education is expected to produce at higher levels, entrepreneurs who are expected to be self-employed as entrenched in the National Policy on Education (2004). In order to achieve its functions, Abelega and Jackson (1997), stressed that business education's learning activities must be carried to the doing stage. One major way of realizing this is through the students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES).

Ugiagbe (2007), also opined that the students, industrial work experience scheme has become an extraordinary journey in a student's road to achieving competencies in the skill areas of business education. This is the major reason why the students must perform their duties normally as if they were permanent staff. Supporting this, Johnson (1976), cited by Okoh (1999), gathered the information that any cooperative efforts between businessmen and education for the purpose of providing hands on industrial experience scheme for students in actual business establishment, would go a long way to bridging the gap between theory and practical work which could reliably enhance gainful employment opportunities after graduation.

In this vein, Okoh (1999), described industrial training as very vital since it helps to bridge the gap between school life and the world of work by blending meaningful job experience with related business education programme.

The Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme

The students' industrial work experience scheme (SIWES), is the baby of Industrial Training Fund (ITF). ITF was established by General Gowon Regime in 1973. The operational objective as mandated by ITF operational guidelines of 1973 are as follows:

- (a) to bridge the gap between classroom theory and actual practical work in the industry;
- (b) to provide students access to equipment not available in their institutions;
- (c) to expose the students to work methods not taught in their institutions and to apply their knowledge in real work situations;
- (d) to help students make meaningful contact with industry so as to enhance future employment after graduation;
- (e) to make change from school life to working life simple and more tolerable;
- (f) to assess students suitability for their chosen career; and
- (g) to provide opportunity for industries to assess their future employees vis-a-vis their industrial needs (Ekpenyong, 2005).

In this vein, the main objective is to provide students trainees with the opportunity of strengthening their weaknesses in the field of work, enable work attitude to be developed inside real work environment and help students in the area of occupational development and human relations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the extent of achievement of the SIWES as meeting the objectives to the NCE business education students. It will also include any factors militating against the success of SIWES and suggest some recommendations to ameliorate the identified problems.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in order to analyze the items in the questionnaire.

- 1 Do SIWES industrial organizations lack equipment or facilities for on-the-job training of students?
- 2 Are there adequate training plans for students in their workstations?
- 3, Are the assessment of lecturers on students meeting SIWES objective of thoroughness?
4. Are there adequate coordination and supervision of students by the SIWES personnel during SIWES programme?

Methodology

Population and Sample Studied

The population studied in this research were the 2006/2007 set of NCE year 3 students of Business Education Department, School of Vocational and Technical Education, College of Education, Ekiadolor, Benin City. The total population of the students (Year 3) was 120. The choice of NCE Year 3 students is that all of them have completed their SIWES scheme, and as such, were in a good position to give-their individual and collective experience about the goings-on of the scheme.

Techniques

A questionnaire containing twenty (20) items which excludes other basic information, were used for data collection. In this vein, a total number of one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were given out the NCE Year 3 (final year) students of the Department of Business Education. All the respondents returned their copies of the questionnaires, which were collated, analyzed and used for making some useful recommendations and conclusion.

Design of the Study

For this purpose, a four-point Likert Scale was used; e.g. strongly agree (SA), agree (A), Disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). For easy analysis, strongly agree (SA) and agree (A) were grouped as "agreement", while strongly disagree (SD) and disagree (D) were taken as "disagreements". Therefore, the data collected from the respondents were finally computed in tabular form in order to enhance further treatment.

Technique of Data Analysis

The simple percentage technique was used to analyze the data collected. Therefore, the percentage for agreed and disagreed were computed for each of the questionnaire items which covered the various variables and consequently, it was compared to their weighing in which conclusions were drawn.

Result and Discussion Research

Questions 1 and 2:

1. Do SIWES industrial organizations lack equipment/facilities for on-the-job training of students?
2. Are there enough training plans for students in their workstations?

Table 1: Equipment/Facilities and Training Plans

S/NO.	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	There are lack of equipment/facilities for on-the-job training of students in industrial organizations.	37	33	24	26
2.	There are no adequate training plans for students in their workstations.	45	30	21	24

From item one of Table 1 above, it is vivid that there are inadequate equipment and facilities to train students in industrial organizations where they are posted to. 70 (58.3%) of the respondents agreed while 50 (41.7%) disagreed. On the other hand, 75 (62.5%) of the respondents said that there are no adequate training plans for students working in industrial organizations, while 45 (37.5%) disagreed.

It can be deduced from the table that the SIWES programme is weakened as a result of inadequate training plans and shortage of equipment/facilities for training students. Therefore, the much-desired objective of "bridging the gap between theory work learnt in the school and the supposed practical experience" to be achieved during SIWES scheme becomes a mirage.

Table 2: Students' Assessment of Supervision/Coordination and Evaluation ofj3 LWES

S/NO.	Items	SA	A	T	I)	SD
1.	There were no adequate and thorough assessment of students by lecturers during S1WES.	40	35	21		24
2.	There were no adequate coordination and supervision of students by SIWES personnel during S1WES.	37	33	24		26

From item one on Table 2 above, it is clearly seen that 75 (62.5%) of the students agreed that there are no adequate and thorough assessment of students by lecturers during SIWES. Conversely, 45 (37.5%) did not agree.

On item two of the same table, 70 (58.3%) of the respondents said that there are no adequate coordination and supervision of students by SIWES personnel during SIWES scheme.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made:

1. The Federal Ministry of Education should carry out some occasional accreditations of industrial organizations in order to verify or determine either the presence or absence of equipment or facilities for training students during the industrial attachment.
2. All stakeholders, especially the institutions' coordinating units, should make sure that adequate supervisions of students are carried out by lecturers at regular intervals. In the course of doing this, industrial-based supervisors should be told to make sure that students are always deployed from one section to the other within the organization for more industrial work experience.
3. The students' supervision and coordination should be more thorough and be in tune with the write-ups of students in the logbook. Supervisors should discourage the use of students' logbooks as they only yardstick for evaluation. This will make the entire exercise to be worthless and a mockery to the objectives of SIWES if it is overlooked.

4. The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) should endeavour to fund the SIWES scheme more meaningfully so as to put in place the culture of regular payment of students' stipends and lecturers allowances. It is the delay of regular payment that is foot-dragging the efficiency of ! SIWES scheme.
5. The Federal Government of Nigeria should put in place an enduring good electricity power supply in the economy. This is the single commodity that is not sufficient enough to move the machinery, tools, gadgets, instruments, and so on, in industries, and therefore, it is affecting students' practical work during SIWES.
6. All Nigerians should shun the culture of corruption in all its ramifications. It is eating deeply into all corners of the economy, and this is the particular reason why "nothing works for the common good of the citizens" ;is advised by Soneye (2002) and Egbochuku (2003).

Conclusion

'It has become clear from this paper that there are still short-falls in SIWES programme as agreed by the respondents especially in equipment and facilities utilizations. To overcome this, the paper recommends, among others that the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) should improve its funding in order to pave the way for regular payment of students' stipends and lecturers allowances.

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