Research Article

An Appraisal of the Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (Siwes) in Federal College of Agriculture Akure

Alice Mofesola

Library Departments, Federal College of Agriculture, Akure. Ondo State. Nigeria
Email: mofeakk@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper focused on the relevancy of Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) to the National Diploma (ND) course of Federal College of Agriculture Akure. Fifty –five (55) student SIWES reports from year 2002- 2005 were examined and analyzed, oral interview was used to gather data from the students and SIWES coordinator/supervisor. Data gathered were qualitatively analyzed. It is evident from the result that student placement for industrial training (IT) were relevant to their course of study and that SIWES is very relevant to the National Diploma program because it compliments students training through exposure to practical aspect of their courses. It is therefore recommended that Recommendations were made based on problems identified.

Introduction

According to Akerejola (2008), acquisition of practical skill is an antidote to meaningful development in any society. Ochiagha (1995) also posits that practical knowledge is learning without which mastery of an area of knowledge may be too difficult to achieve and that practical knowledge involves developing skills through the use of tools or equipment to perform tasks that are related to a field of study. The federal government of Nigeria introduced the SIWES Scheme in tertiary institutions in 1974 to ensure acquisition of field practical knowledge and skills by students before graduation. SIWES was established by Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to solve the problem of lack of adequate practical skills in preparation for employment in industries by Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions. The scheme exposes students to industry based skills that are necessary for smooth transition from the classroom to the world of work and it gives the students opportunity to be part of real work situation outside the lecture room.

Participation in SIWES is a necessary pre-condition for the award of Diploma and Degree certificates in specific disciplines in most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Eze (1998) observed that SIWES commenced in 1974 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. For students in polytechnics/mono-techniques and colleges of education, the SIWES duration is four months while the university undergraduates go for six months. Each institution is expected to have SIWES coordinator who is in charge of all activities that pertains to student industrial training in the institutions.

SIWES Objectives

According to Eze(1998), the objectives of SIWES as summarized by the federal government in its gazette of April 1978 are to:

- Provide an avenue for students in higher institutions of learning to acquire industrial skills and experience in their course of study.
- Prepare student for the industrial work situation they will meet after graduation.
- Expose students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in their institutions.
- Make the transition from school to the world of work easier and enhance student’s contacts for job placement.
- Provide students with an opportunity to apply the knowledge in real work situation to their training thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice.
• Enlist and strengthen employer’s involvement in the entire education process and prepare student for employment in industry and commerce.

Federal College of Agriculture (Programs/Mandate)

The Federal College of Agriculture Akure’s mandate is to train middle level manpower for agriculture and related industries. The college awards National Diploma (ND) in both general Agricultural Technology and Agricultural Engineering while it runs Higher National Diploma (HND) courses in Agricultural Extension and Management, Animal Production Technology, Crop Production, Horticultural and Landscaping Design. The four months SIWES training is part of the pre – requisite for the award of National Diploma of the college.

Considering the mandate of the college and the student curriculum of study which lay much emphasis on practical work and the set objectives of SIWES, a study to appraise SIWES program in Federal College of Agriculture Akure cannot be out of place.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follow:

- Ascertain the relevance of students’ placement for SIWES to their course of study.
- Determine the relevance of SIWES to ND program of Federal College of Agriculture, Akure.
- Determine if SIWES as being carried out in Federal college Agriculture Akure meets the federal government set objectives for the program.
- Make suggestions on how to improve on the existing practice based on problems identified.

Scope of the Study

2002-2006. Fifty-five (55) student IT project reports were selected for study, based on students’ placement for IT. All the reports selected were carried out in the western zone of Nigeria

METHODOLOGY

Fifty-five (55) students IT reports were analyzed to:

- Determine the relevance of students’ placement for IT to their curriculum.
- Know the level of knowledge gained by the students during the SIWES program.
- Ascertain the importance of SIWES to the National Diploma (ND) of Federal College of Agriculture.
- Determine whether SIWES in Federal college of Agriculture Akure meets the federal government’s set objectives for SIWES.

To further clarify the above, twenty students were interviewed by asking them the following questions:

- Who does the placement for IT at the Federal College of Agriculture Akure?
- How relevant were the placements to student curriculum?
- Based on your experience during IT, do you think SIWES is important to the ND Course?
- Mention some of the problems you encounter during IT?
- How do you think these problems can be solved?

Also the SIWES coordinator for the college was interviewed to find out the following:

- What is the level of supervision given to the students during IT.? 
- Who does the IT placement for student (student or college authority)?
- How relevant were the placements for SIWES to students’ course of study?
- How serious or committed were the students to the scheme?
- What are the problems facing SIWES program in the college and what are the possible solutions?
Data Analysis and Discussion

The study shows that out of the fifty-five (55) students' SIWES report analyzed twenty-seven (27) that is 49% SIWES placement were very relevant to students courses while twenty-six (26) 47.3% were relevant and only two (2) 3.7% were not relevant. This implies that the placement of students for industrial training through SIWES in Federal College of Agriculture Akure is relevant to the students’ course of study and this fulfills the number one objective of the Federal government for establishing SIWES. See chart 1

Chart 1: Relevancy of student Placement for SIWES to their curriculum

The evidence of knowledge gained by the students was presented in chart 2. From the quantitative analysis done on the fifty-five (55) students’ SIWES project reports, thirty-five (63.7%) show high evidence of knowledge gained while seven (12.7%) show slight evidence of knowledge gained and thirteen (23.6%) show that there were no evidences of knowledge gained by the students. This was based on the quality of the log books and the reports written by the students during and after the IT program.

Chart 2: Evidence of Knowledge Gained
The quality of the students SIWES reports shows that the Industrial training program is very relevant to the National Diploma program of the college. Twenty one (38.2%) of the reports analyzed were well written revealing in details all the activities carried out at the center and the experience gained were well spelt out, twenty three (41.8%) reports were fairly written while eleven (20%) were poorly written. See chart 3.

![Chart 3: Quality of Student’s SIWES Report](image)

All the students and SIWES coordinator interviewed confirmed that students’ placement were done by students but that the college authority compels them to choose relevant centers for the industrial training, however, we still found few defaulters. Also all the students and coordinator answered that SIWES is very important to the National Diploma program because it compliments students’ studies through exposure to practical aspects of their courses and having physical contact with tools used in farms and industries and that SIWES should not be scrapped but be improved on.

It is evident from this study that the Federal College of Agriculture Akure SIWES program conforms to the Federal government’s set objectives for Student Industrial Training in Nigeria.

### Problems Identified

The following problems were identified from the students and the coordinator:

1. Inadequate monitoring of students on industrial training
2. Lack of cooperation and support from companies and organizations
3. Delay in release of funds for supervision and student’s industrial training allowances
4. It was also observed in the course of this study that student’s project reports were not corrected.

### Conclusion

The graduates of Federal College of Agriculture Akure are expected to have acquired enough practical skill to enable them manage their own farms with little or no assistance. They are also expected to be able to work directly in unit of large commercial farms, agro-based industries or any relevant government organization. Hence the National Diploma curriculum emphasizes the practical aspect of the training to a very large extent. Therefore, the importance of industrial training cannot be overemphasized because it boosts the student’s practical experience and exposure which in turn lays foundation for student’s development and nation building. It was revealed during the course of this study that students do get appointment after graduation through SIWES connection.
Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

1. Visiting of students during the SIWES program should be ensured by the Industrial Training Fund officials and college coordinators in order to ensure that students get necessary exposure and to boost their morale.
2. Companies/ Organizations should be sensitized through organization of workshops/seminars in order to acquaint them with their expected roles towards students on industrial training.
3. Federal government should endeavor to make fund available to the institutions as at when due in order to facilitate proper monitoring of students on IT.
4. Students should be paid their IT allowance to time so that they can be motivated.
5. Also the federal government should make it mandatory for companies/organizations to supplement funding of the scheme by paying students stipends and providing enabling condition for them.
6. Students should be taught how to write reports and their reports should be read through and corrected.
7. Selection of placement should not be left completely to students. The college should device a means of allocating students to related companies/organizations.

References