

ASSESSMENT OF SIWES EXPERIENCE AMONG LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE STUDENTS IN NASARAWA STATE POLYTECHNIC

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ABSTRACT

This study is an appraisal of Student Industrial Experience Work Experience (SIWES) experience of Nasarawa State Polytechnic (NASPOLY) Lafia. It assessed the categories of institutions where students did their SIWES, to find out benefits derived by LIS students in SIWES, to ascertain the challenges confronting the students during SIWES as well as the possible remedies to overcome the challenges were identified. An evaluative design was used for the study with a population of 126 students. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. In analyzing the data, percentages, mean and frequency tables were used. The findings revealed that: academic libraries, public libraries special/research libraries, information centers, documentation centers and radio stations were some of the institutions where students had their industrial experience. The findings also revealed that one of the major benefits of SIWES was that it provided avenues for students to acquire practical skills and experience in their courses of study. The study further identified finance, transportation, accommodation, inadequate working tools and inadequate co-operation from employers to be some of the major challenges confronting students on SIWES. Based on the findings it was recommended that provision of monthly allowances during SIWES, provision of means of transportation, and accommodation, provision of state of the art working tools and as well as adequate co-operation from employers were identified as remedies to the aforementioned challenges.

Keyword: Assessment, SIWES Experience, Students, Nassarawa State Polytechnic

Introduction

The Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a skill training programme designed to expose and prepare students of Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Technology, Agriculture and College of Education to real life work situation after graduation. The scheme according to ITF (2004) is meant for students of engineering and technology including environmental, agriculture, technical and business studies in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The scheme has duration of six months for University undergraduates and four months for Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

According to Adoku(2010) before the establishment of the scheme, it was observed that there was a general outcry and growing concern by industrialists in Nigeria that graduates lack adequate and requisite practical background and skills that will adequately equip them for employment in industries. As a result, there was a growing need for a programme that would afford the 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.

SIWES was initiated by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1973 to bridge the gap between theory and practice among students of engineering and technology institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The objectives of SIWES according to ITF policy (1973) are:

- a. To provide an avenue for students of higher learning to acquire industrial skills and experience in their courses of study, which are restricted to engineering and technology including environmental studies and other courses that may be approved.
- b. Prepare students for the industrial work situation they are to meet after graduation
- c. Expose students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in their institutions
- d. Make the transition from school to the world of work easier and enhance students contact for later job placement
- e. Provide students with an opportunity to apply their knowledge in real work situation thereby bridging the gap between theory and practical
- f. Enlist and strengthen employer's involvement in the entire educational process and prepare students for employment in industry and commerce.

From the above objectives, it is clear that the scheme is aimed at promoting the much desired technological know-how required to build an indigenous self reliant economy envisaged for Nigeria.

Librarianship, like other professions, is dynamic. Nowadays, the application of the computer technology to library operations, as observed by Ugwuanyi and Ezema (2010) has no doubt widen the scope and has placed more demands on the ability of librarians. Hence Ugwuanyi and Ezema (2010) cited Karrisiddapa (2004) and maintains that the contemporary environment indicate a pressing need to educate and train library employees for a sustainable professional competence. Nse (2012) corroborated the above view by noting that library and Information Science programmes are skill oriented, and to acquire adequate skills, training must occur in the appropriate environment. Hence the imperativeness of SIWES for would-be-librarians.

For SIWES to achieve the objectives of exposing students to industry based skills that are necessary for the advancement of the nation, all hands must be on deck. This is because, as relevant as the scheme is, it is not without challenges that appear to be militating against its full implementation. Hence, the imperative need for an appraisal of the challenges confronting students on the scheme with a view to proffering possible suggestions for consideration if the aim for the establishment of this laudable programme must be attained.

Statement of the Problem

In pursuance of its objectives of exposing students to machines and equipment as well as professional work methods, SIWES has been sponsoring students for the industrial training. However, upon the return of Library and Information Science students from the training, the desired outcome expected from them is usually lacking. This is probably due to some challenges confronting the students during the training which if not urgently identified and addressed will no doubt continue to sabotage the objective for which SIWES was established.

The above circumstance therefore calls for this research which sort to finding out the various challenges confronting the library and information science students of NASPOLY Lafia during the 2012/2013 SIWES programme with the view of providing possible suggestions to overcome the identified challenges.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to carry out an assessment of SIWES experience among Library and Information Science students of NASPOLY Lafia. Specifically the study will:

1. Find out the types of Libraries and Information Centers where the students did their SIWES
2. Ascertain the benefits derived by LIS students in SIWES
3. Determine the challenges faced by the students during the SIWES experience
4. Determine the remedies to the challenges confronting the students on SIWES.

Research Questions

1. What are the types of library and information centres in which students did their SIWES?
2. What are the benefits derived by LIS students in SIWES?
3. What are the challenges faced by students during the SIWES experience?
4. What are the remedies to the challenges confronting students on SIWES?

Methodology

The research design that was adopted for the study was evaluative research method. The study population comprised of 126 final year students of Library and Information Science Department in Nassarawa State Polytechnic. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The researchers designed a structured questionnaire that asked questions that were corresponding with the research questions. One hundred and twenty six (126) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the students who participated in SIWES. One hundred and fourteen were returned (114). Data collected were analyzed using mean and percentages. A percentage score of 50% and a mean score of 2.5 were used as bench mark.

Data presentation and discussion of the findings

Table 1: Categories of library and information centres where students did their SIWES

S/n	Institutions	F	%
1	Academic Libraries	71	62
2	Public Libraries	20	18
3	Special/Research Libraries	8	7
4	Radio station	7	6
5	Documentation	6	5
6	Information Centre	2	2
7	Bookshop	0	0
8	Achieve	0	0
9	Publishing house	0	0
10	Television	0	0
		114	100%

Categories of institutions where students did their SIWES:

Table 1 reveals that there are various institutions where students did their SIWES. Findings of this study reveal that out of the 114 students that did their SIWES from the Naspoly for the 2012/2013 academic session, 71 students which represent (62%) did theirs in academic libraries. (18%) had theirs in public libraries. Seven (7%) did theirs in special/research libraries, (6%) of the students did theirs in radio stations, (5%) had theirs in documentation centers and radio houses respectively. None of the students did the SIWES in either television house, bookshop or achieves.

Table 2: Benefits derived by LIS students in SIWES

S/N	Benefits	VGE	GE	LE	NE	X	Ranking	D
1	To provide avenues for students to acquire practical Skills and experience in their courses of study.	114	-	-	-	4	1 st	A
2	To prepare students for future employments in industry and commerce.	101	13	-	-	3.5	2 nd	A
3	To expose students on various methods and techniques in handling equipments and machineries.	93	21	-	-	3.3	3 rd	A
4	To enhance student personal attributes e.g critical thinking, creativity, initiative, resourcefulness, leadership, time management and interpersonal skills.	81	33	-	-	3.0	4 th	A
5	To bridge the gap between theories acquired in the classroom with practical hands on application of knowledge required to perform work in industry.	75	39	-	-	2.6	5 th	A

The data on table 2 represents the students' ratings on the benefits derived by LIS students in SIWES. The table shows that to provide avenues for students to acquire industrial skills and experience in their courses of study (4.0) was the major benefit of SIWES to LIS students. Other benefits as indicated in the table are: to prepare students for future employment in industry and commerce(3.5), to expose students on various techniques in handling equipment and machineries (3.3), to prepare students for industrial situation after graduation (3.0) and to bridge the gap between theory and practice (2.6).

Table 3: Challenges faced by the students during the SIWES experience

S/N	Challenges	VGE	GE	LE	NE	X	Ranking	D
1	Non-Provision of monthly allowance during SIWES.	114	-	-	-	4	1 st	A
2	Non-Availability of state of the art working tools.	68	32	14	-	3.5	2 nd	A
3	Non-Provision of transportation means during SIWES.	31	62	11	-	2.9	3 rd	A
4	Inadequate cooperation from employees.	25	32	37	19	2.5	4 th	A
5	Reduction of the training period for the SIWES.	19	22	31	42	2.2	5 th	R
6	Non-Provision of accommodation.	15	9	80	-	2.2	6 th	R
7	Lack of Constant supervision.	7	9	42	56	1.8	7 th	R
8	Extension of the training period for SIWES	5	12	28	69	1.6	8 th	R

Key: VGE = Very Great Extent, GE = Great Extent, LE = Less Extent, NE = No Extent, X = mean, D = Decision: (E=Rejected and A=Accepted)

Table 3 reveals that the major challenges confronting students during SIWES ranges from non-provision of monthly allowance during SIWES (4.0), non-availability of state of the art working tools(3.5), non-provision of transportation means during SIWES (2.9) and inadequate cooperation from employees (2.5). On the other hand, the issues of accommodation, duration and supervision do not constitute major challenges to the students on SIWES.

Table 4: Remedies to the challenges confronting students during SIWES

s/n	Remedies to the challenges	VGE	GE	LE	NE	X	Ranking	D
1	Provision of monthly allowance during SIWES.	114	0	0	0	4	1 st	A
2	Provision of transportation means during SIWES	98	14	2	0	3.8	2 nd	A
3	Provision of accommodation.	91	16	7	0	3.7	3 rd	A
4	Availability of state of the art working tools	92	14	8	0	3.7	3 rd	A
5	Adequate cooperation from employees	32	34	31	17	2.7	5 th	A
6	Extension of the training period for SIWES	0	8	14	92	1.3	8 th	R
7	Reduction of the training period for the SIWES.	2	30	28	54	1.8	7 th	R
8	Constant supervision.	16	27	29	42	2.3	6 th	R

In table 4, it is evident that, provision of monthly allowance to students on SIWES will be a major bust in controlling the challenges faced by students during SIWES (4.0). This is closely followed by the provision of transportation means to and from the working place (3.8). Similarly, provision of accommodation, availability of the state of the art working tools as well as adequate cooperation from employees can also serve as remedies to the challenges confronting students during SIWES.

Discussion of findings

There are various library and Information Centers where students did their SIWES. Findings of this study revealed that majority of the students did their SIWES in academic libraries. Other library and Information Centers students did their SIWES are public libraries, special/research libraries, radio stations, documentation and information centres. None of the students did the SIWES in either television house, bookshop or libraries. The result indicates that, majority of the students prefer to do their SIWES in the would-be librarians can have first hand training for their future career.

As indicated from the findings, many benefits were derived by LIS students in SIWES. However providing avenues for students to acquire industrial skills and experiences in their courses of study had the highest rating. The importance of students acquiring the relevant skills in their courses of study cannot be overemphasized. It will enable students especially library and information science students to develop their personal and professional competences, so that they can contribute their quota to national development after graduation. This finding is in line with Mafe (2010) who indicated that SIWES enable students not only to be knowledgeable but for them to also be versatile in the application of skills to perform defined jobs or work.

The findings of the study show that despite the significance of SIWES, some challenges are found to be militating against the full implementation of the programme. Such challenges include: finance, inadequate working tools, non-provision of transportation and inadequate co-operation from employers. It is pertinent to note that this as resulted in lukewarm attitudes on the part of the students towards participating in the SIWES. These findings relates to that of Aduku (2010), who stated that: finance, accommodation, transportation and insufficient working tools are the major problems encountered by students during SIWES.

From the study it was observed that students adopted the following as strategies for overcoming the challenges facing them during SIWES. These include: provision of monthly allowances during the SIWES period, provision of means of transportation during SIWES, provision of accommodation, availability of adequate working tools as well as adequate co-operation from employers. No society can achieve meaningful development without the contributions of the youths in terms of human resources. Government must realize that to motivate students participates adequate incentives and working materials must be provided for them at the right time. These conformed to the findings of Mefosola (2012) who argued in favour of the payment of SIWES allowance to deserving students while on IT. This will go a long way in supporting the students in their desire to achieve the aim for which SIWES was established.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve the situation.

1. Government should make funds available to the authorities of SIWES for prompt payment of monthly allowances to students during the training period as opposed to the current trend where students are paid their allowances long after completing the training programme.
2. Employers of labour should provide transportation means for the students on the training particularly if they cannot afford accommodation for the students on training close to the work place. This will not just check truancy among the students but will equally serve as a motivating factor.
3. Particularly too, employers accepting students on SIWES should ensure that the state of the art working tools needed for the training are provided if the aim of SIWES at bridging the gap between theory and practical must be attained.
4. Finally, the desired cooperation needed by the students from the employers for effective learning should be given. This will create a sense of belonging among the students and will enhance participation.

Conclusion

The aim of SIWES at giving the students the opportunity to relate and translate their theoretical knowledge to the real world of work is no doubt a laudable one. However, for the scheme to be adequately implemented, all hands must be on deck. The government, the employee of labour (industries), institutions of higher learning and particularly the students should be aware of what the present society holds for them and adopt accordingly.

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