

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The student industrial work Experience Scheme (SIWES), is a skills development programme initiated by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF).in 1937 to bridge the gap between theory and practice among students of engineering and technology in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. It provide for on-the-job practical experience for students as they are exposed to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in their institutions.

At inception in 1974, the scheme started with 784 students from 11 institutions and 104 eligible courses. By 2008,210,390 students from 219 institutions participated in the scheme with over 112 eligible courses.

However, the rapid growth and expansion of SIWES' has occurred against the backdrop of successive economic crises which have affected the smooth operation and administration of the scheme. Most industries in Nigeria today, are operating below installed capacity while others are completely shut down. (Manufacturing Association, 2003-2006). This has impacted negatively on the Scheme as institutions of higher Learning find it increasingly difficult to secure placement for students in industries where they could acquire the much needed practical experience.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to evaluate the impact of SIWES on technical skills Development in the Nigerian economy. This is to enable institutions of Higher Learning and other stakeholders access the performance of their roles in the scheme.

METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the aim of the survey, a total of 1,200 questionnaires were administered to SIWES Students, SIWES Graduates and 60 to the Employers of labour. Similarly, 36 Head of institutions, institution based SIWES Coordinators/Directors participated in SSI while 30 Human

Resource Managers and 60 industry based SIWES Supervisors were also interviewed. A total of 18 Focus group discussion (FGD) were held with SIWES Graduates and ITF SIWES Schedule Officers equally participated in FGD.

The six geo-political zones of the country and the 27 Area Offices of the ITF were the bases for sampling. The fieldwork for the study lasted two weeks in December 2008 across the Six Geo-Political Zones. The field personnel enjoyed cooperation and support of SIWES participating Institutions and their representatives during data collection. A few Researchers did not, however receive cooperation of Employers of Labour to administer instruments to Students, largely due to their misconceptions or disputes.

Lack of uniform academic calendar for all institutions, including SIWES calendar affected the capacity of Research Teams to administer some Research Instruments.

Major Findings

The findings of the survey include:

1. Most Students (75%) described SIWES as very relevant to Technical Skills Development, while SIWES Graduates (92.5%) reported that they acquired new skills during their SIWES attachment.
2. Inadequate funding for the smooth management of the Scheme.
3. Inadequate/ineffective supervision of Students on attachment by Staff of Institution, ITF and Employers of Labour, largely due to lack/shortage/inadequate vehicles, supervision allowance and delays in the payment of same to both staff and students.
4. Placement of Students in relevant Industries is a major challenge due to the growing number of Institution, eligible courses and Students involved in SIWES while relevant industries are shutting down
5. Employers of Labour have high positive perception of SIWES in imparting skills to students, thus enhancing their performance.
6. There is a general consensus among Heads of Institution and Institution-based Coordinators that SIWES makes the education process

complete as it bridges the gap between the theoretical knowledge acquired in institution through practical hands-on experience in industry.

7. A major factor determining the acceptance of student for SIWES by Organizations/Establishments is availability of vacancy.

Recommendations

1. The number of institution and students participating in SIWES have been on the increase without corresponding increase in funding of the Scheme. the study recommends that the Federal ministry of Science and technology (FMST), Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity (FMLP) education trust fund (ETF), and Millennium Development goals (MDGs) of the presidency be involved as major stakeholders that will be saddled with the responsibility of formulating policies to guide the operations of the Scheme and advice the Federal Government appropriately particularly, on funding the Scheme.
2. 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
3. Institution should be encouraged to create financial autonomy for institution-based SIWES Unit /Directorates
4. Separate SIWES sub-head by the federal government
5. Motivate partners from the private sector through granting tax relief for companies that accept Students on SIWES
6. Instrument for the administration of the Scheme should be periodically reviewed to ensure relevance, and uniformity.