

## **Industrial Training as a Transformational Programme for Business Educators in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper identifies Industrial Training as a Transformational Programme for Business Educators in Nigeria. It looked at different definitions of Business Education, who a business educator is, the objectives of Business Education as well as its importance to the nation. It also identifies what Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is and the objectives, which is meant for students to match their theoretical school knowledge with the practical aspect of their training in Industry. Also, the issues and challenges faced by the students and industry were discussed. Hence, in order to effectively achieve the goals and objectives of the Scheme (SIWES), it was recommended among others that orientation programmes should be conducted for students before embarking on Industrial Training exercise so as to understand the objectives of SIWES and on the part of the Industry, the employer should be sensitized on the need to expose the trainees to such areas of training that would positively contribute to their level of acquisition of Business Education skills.*

**Keywords:** Business education, Business educator, Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), Transformation.

## **Introduction**

Business Education is an education programme that prepares the individual for the world of work as a teacher, office worker, an employer of labour or self-employed. Onasoga, Olatunde and Egbeyemi, 2016. Osuala (2004) refers to Business Education as a programme of instruction which consists of two parts (i) Office Education which is a Vocational Education programme for office careers through the initial refresher and upgrading education and (ii) General Business Education, a programme that provides students with the information and competencies needed by all to manage personal business affairs and to use the services of business organisations.

Business Education has been defined in several ways, most of which highlights its vocational nature. Education prepares its beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. It is generally seen as education for and about business. Since the primary goal of business education is to produce competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. It can then be opined that business education is an impetus and *sine qua non* to national transformation because economic development usually engenders national transformation.

A Business Educator is a professional teacher who learnt the rudiments of transmitting knowledge of business to others.

Transformation actually means a complete change from one situation to another, a total departure from the old order to a new one. Transformation does not come accidentally, but requires deliberate effort. To change from a failure to a successful person calls for performance of some activities that will facilitate the actualization of such dreams, transformation calls for practical action and goes beyond mere expression or verbal pronouncement, but requires a number of tasks to be performed. Transformation is a concept that has been diversely defined by scholars of different backgrounds and orientations. It is a fundamental shift in the deep orientation of a person, an organization, or a nation, such that the world is seen in new ways and new actions and results

become possible that were impossible prior to the transformation (UNDP-LDP, cited in Asobie, 2012).

The Industrial Training Fund Act (ITFA) came into effect on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1971. The purpose of the Act was to establish a fund. The Industrial Training Fund is to be utilized to promote and encourage the acquisition of skills in industry or commerce in Nigeria with a view to generating a pool of indigenous trained manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the economy.

Encouraging greater involvement of employees, particularly small employees in the organisation and development of training programmes and facilities including the establishment of Group Training Scheme and centres in certain areas of economic activity such as

1. Building of training facilities of its own in identified areas of national needs.
2. Organising research and studies into training as a support to other activities of the Fund.
3. Establishing uniform National Vocational Apprenticeship Training Scheme in the country.
4. Seeking to harmonise ITF's non-formal training programmes in the curricula of formal educational Institutions.
5. Bearing a proportion of direct cost of on-the-job and off-the-job training of Nigerian employees.

As part of its responsibilities, the ITF provides direct training, vocational and apprentice training, research and consultancy service, reimbursement of up to 50% levy paid by employers of labour registered with it, and administers the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). It also provides human resource development information and training technology service to industry and commerce to enhance their manpower capacity and in-house training delivery effort.

The main thrust of ITF programmes and services is to stimulate human performance, improve productivity, and induce value-added production in industry and commerce. Through its SIWES and Vocational and Apprentice Training Programmes, the Fund also builds capacity for graduates and youth self-employment, in the context of Small Scale Industrialization, in the economy. ITF programmes and services is to be the foremost skills training development organization in Nigeria and one

of the best in the world. To set and regulate standards and offer direct training intervention in industrial and commercial skills training and development, using a corps of highly competent professional staff, modern techniques and technology.

### **Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)**

The Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) was established by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) 1973 to enable students of tertiary institutions have basic technical knowledge of industrial works based on their courses of study before the completion of their program in their respective institutions.(Abdullahi, 2010).

Prior to the establishment of the scheme, there was great concern among industrialists that graduates of institutions of higher learning lacked adequate practical background studies preparatory for employment in the industries. The scheme is a planned and supervised training intervention based on stated and specific learning and career objectives and geared towards developing the occupational competencies of the participants. It is a programme required to be undertaken by all students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria pursuing courses in specialized engineering, technical, business, applied sciences and applied Arts (ITF, 2004).

The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a skills training programme designed to expose and prepare students of universities and other tertiary institutions for the industrial work situation they are likely to meet after graduation. It is also a planned and structured programme based on stated and specific career objectives which are geared towards developing the occupational competencies of participants (Mafe, 2009). Consequently, the SIWES programme is a compulsory graduation requirement for all Nigerian university students offering certain courses.

The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is the accepted training programme, which is part of the approved Minimum Academic Standard in the various degree programmes for all Nigerian Universities. The scheme is aimed at bridging the existing gap between theory and practice of Sciences, Agriculture, Medical Sciences (including

Nursing), Engineering and Technology, Management, and Information and Communication Technology and other professional educational programmes in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. It is aimed at exposing students to machines and equipment, professional work methods and ways of safeguarding the work areas and workers in industries, offices, laboratories, hospitals and other organizations.

Prior to establishing the scheme, industrialists and other employers of labour felt concerned that graduates of Nigerian universities were deficient in practical background studies preparatory for employment in industries and other organizations. The employers thus concluded that the theoretical education being received in our higher institutions was not responsive to the needs of the employers of labour. The scheme is a tripartite programme involving the students, the universities and the employers of labour. It is funded by the Federal Government and jointly coordinated by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and the National Universities Commission

The minimum duration for SIWES should normally be 24 weeks (6 months) at a stretch. The period is longer for engineering and technology programmes. The ITF will not pay for any attachment period that is less than 24 weeks. In most institutions, SIWES is done at the end of the 2nd semester examination of 300, 400 or 500 level. The time and duration will have to be worked out jointly by each school and the directorate and the ITF.

### ***Objectives of SIWES***

The programmes of SIWES are designed to achieve the following objectives:

- i. Provision of avenue for students to acquire industrial skills and experience during their course of study
- ii. To prepare students for the work situation they are likely to meet after graduation
- iii. To expose students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machineries that may not be available in the universities
- iv. To make the transition from the university to the world of work easier and thus enhance students contacts for later job placement.

- v. To provide students with an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in real work situations, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice.

The need for ensuring that the theoretical knowledge acquired by students is matched with their practical knowledge gave room to the establishment of Student Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES). SIWES is one of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) programmes which were introduced in 1974 due to the inability of engineering and technology students in Nigeria universities and polytechnics to meet the practical aspects of their training. That is, the needs to enable students match their theoretical school knowledge with the practical aspect of their training in industry. According to Ekpenyong (2011), one of the principles underlying any industrial work experience scheme for students in institutions of learning is the desire to marry the practical with the theoretical learning which characterizes conventional classroom situations with a view to striking a balance between theory and practice. The author stressed further that it was in realization of this that the ITF when it was established, set out to study the extent to which the theoretical knowledge that students in engineering technology and other allied fields in Nigerian institutions offering technology based courses related to the kind of work experience expected of them by employers.

The result of the ITF survey showed a great disparity between students' knowledge and their ability to apply it in relevant jobs. In order to bridge the gap between the two, the ITF in 1974 established a co-operative internship programme, which enabled students of technology to spend some part of their courses for relevant on-the-job practical experiences in appropriate areas of the Nigerian industry (Ekpenyong, 2011). The author further stressed that the internship programme, SIWES, can therefore be seen as that which is intended to give Nigerian students studying occupationally-related courses experience that would supplement their theoretical learning as a well of equipping the students with the needed skills to function in the world of work.

According to Ihebereme (2010), skill acquisition is the process of acquiring or gaining effective and ready knowledge in developing ones aptitude and ability in a particular field. It is also described as ability to show competence in what one is doing as a result of the theoretical and

practical knowledge gained through training (Nwonyeh, 2010). Ihebereme (2010) stressed that skill acquisition is one among other policies embarked upon in Nigeria with the sole aim to alleviate poverty, youth restiveness, sophisticated crime and corruption rate, rural-urban drift, unemployment and other social vices. Skill acquisition in Nigeria education is meant to equip our students with more practical and less theoretical knowledge that will make the students to be more useful in the world of work. The study by Uramah (2003) revealed that proper implementation of SIWES programme encourages good academic performance and enhances better productivity by students in the labour market.

### ***Challenges of SIWES***

On professional development of Business Education students, there are some noticeable challenges facing students' industrial work experience scheme which impede the fulfillment of its objectives. These challenges include:

- i. **Financial Constraint**  
Finance constraint is one of the challenges which affect certain aspects of its operations like students' supervision and payment of allowances to participants.
- ii. **Students' Placement**  
The issue of students' placement is another challenge facing SIWES operation. Some employers are not willing to accept students into their establishments due to poor attitudes of some students and for not wanting to take responsibility of remuneration of students after completion of the scheme.
- iii. **The attitude of students towards Industrial Training**  
There is also the problem of some students wanting to choose places of attachment by themselves for reasons ranging from not wanting to be far from their homes and wanting to use the period for enjoyment and leisure like holiday period, thereby choosing places that are not related to their profession.

- iv. Irregularity in academic calendar  
Also facing SIWES operation is irregularity in academic calendar of institutions. The issue of strike and students' unrest leading to closure of institutions has a serious negative effect on duration of the training. The implication of this is that enough practical experience is not obtainable by students and thereby affecting their professional development negatively.
- v. Unwillingness of various organisations to take students for training  
Among the major issues faced by institutions is the small number of trainees taken in by organisations at any given time. Given that there are thousands of students from various public and private universities seeking placements at almost the same period of time, industrial training has become a competitive endeavour for students. This is compounded by criteria set by organisations, where they generally seek trainees who have high grade point averages and those who are proficient in English. The placement of trainees is akin to job placements, with students having to send in their resumes and attending interviews. While such demands prepare students for the world of work upon graduation, they also make it difficult for students who do not 'make the cut' to find suitable industrial training positions.
- vi. Number of students applying at the same time.  
The large number of students applying for industrial training positions also means that organisations have the luxury of waiting till the very last minute before deciding on their choice of trainees - making it a very stressful wait for students and institutions. With industrial training being a compulsory component of the curriculum for many undergraduate programmes, students who have difficulty in securing placements may have problems fulfilling their credit requirement and end up graduating later than their peers.
- vii. Allowances  
There is also the issue of allowances paid to students, where there are cases where students do not receive any allowance at all. This puts a burden on students who not only have to pay semester fees during their industrial training period but also have to bear the cost



of accommodation and travel expenses during their industrial training period. This in turn means that students prefer to do their training at organisations near their homes, sometimes losing the opportunity to maximize the full potential of their training experience.

viii. Task given to trainees

Another issue that institutions face is the kind of tasks given to trainees. While it is acknowledged that trainees have limited knowledge, skills and experience at the time of training, industry should not just assign trainees with mundane tasks but provide more structured training programme with appropriate supervision so that the trainees actually learn on-the-job skills making it a meaningful learning experience as well as the feedback from the organisations.

**Benefits of Business Education Industrial Training Programme**

Business Education Industrial training programme or work experience programme has the following benefits:

1. Administrators of schools, business teachers and students learn what industry needs and industry in turn learns what the school and students attempt to do thereby providing the needed technologies and strengthening the curriculum.
2. Industry cooperation assists the school by reducing the burden of investing and acquiring latest office technologies.
3. The trainees would have a wide exposure of modern state-of-arts equipment use in the industry which many schools cannot afford.
4. Essentially, school based programmes are theoretical, students are exposed to practical work and learning by actually using the business machines and equipment the industry can provide.
5. Business Education and industry cooperation promote good public relations between school and industrial firms.
6. Student's entry to real world of work situation on post-graduation is made easier as fore-knowledge in the application of wide range of business office machines and equipment.

### **Issues and Challenges Faced by Industry**

- i. On the part of industry, it is understandable that they can only take in a limited number of trainees at a time and that there are financial, manpower and other resources involved in the placement of trainees. Without any incentives, such as tax relief, or financial assistance, some organisations are reluctant to welcome trainees.
- ii. Those that do accept them generally want the best students because the assumption would be that these students will be able to carry out their tasks more efficiently, and thus less time and effort (in other words, productive work time) needs to be put into training them. Industry also wants to select the best students as their trainees because the training period is an ideal opportunity for them to evaluate the potential of the trainees as future employees.
- iii. Industry also prefers students who are proficient in English. In this respect, one of the recurring comments about industrial trainees relates to their lack of English proficiency and communication skills, which also echoes industry's sentiments about graduates.
- iv. Apart from the selection of students, one of the main issues about industrial training brought up by industry is the duration of the training period. Industry generally prefers trainees to be placed for at least six months so as to maximize the full potential of the practical experience. Thus, institutions whose students have longer training periods are more likely to be selected by industry.
- v. Another issue that has been highlighted is the lack of structure in industrial training programmes, in terms of what types of tasks trainees are expected to perform and how the training period should be.
- vi. Industry also laments the lack of partnership and collaboration between industry and academia. Many organisations have shown a great interest in assisting with curriculum development and with pre-industrial training programmes, such a company introduction, and soft-skills development workshops.

Industrial Training programme is a way of transforming the lives of the recipient, that is, the students, to meet up with the requirement of the industry and to promote occupational knowledge. It enables

the students to gain the practical aspect of what they were being taught in the school, so that upon graduation, they will have the confidence to face the world of work and also, the employers will not be spending extra cost on training them again.

### **Conclusion**

Business education remains the foundation of human resource development which provides knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding needed to perform in the business world as a producer or consumer of economic goods and services that business offers. To ensure national transformation as being emphasized as slogan on daily basis, there is immediate need to tackle the challenges of business education programme headlong to pave way for the fulfillment of its roles in national life.

In an era where the demand for workers who can use modern technology to increase national productivity and industrialization is on the increase, the need for a symbiotic relationship between Business Education and the industries has become inevitable. This is more so because such partnership which is usually developed on agreement among employers, students and the school provide supervised workplace employment opportunities, service learning and experiential learning and thus facilitate school-to-work transition.

Also, having an industrial training component in a degree programme can add tremendous value to any degree programme, particularly as it can enhance the employability skills of graduate. Feedback obtained from industry, such as on the lack of English communication skills of students, must be taken seriously.

In order to ensure that industrial training becomes a natural part of university training, efforts must be collaboratively and not individually taken by institutions, industry and the government so that some of the issues and challenges mentioned can be addressed.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Orientation programmes should be conducted for business education students before embarking on Industrial Training exercise. This will help to understand the objectives of SIWES and help them

to appreciate the need for their cooperation and seriousness during the exercise.

- ii. Organizations should always provide the necessary logistics needed for the smooth running of the SIWES;
- iii. Regular monthly allowances for students on attachment should be paid promptly;
- iv. Organizations should always accept students for SIWES and subsequently assign them to relevant jobs;
- v. Highly skilled staff should always be made to train the students on attachment;
- vi. Business Education students learning progress should be closely monitored and supervised by experienced staff;
- vii. Employers of labour should be more willing to absorb business education students for SIWES;
- viii. There should be more collaborative efforts or liaison between business organizations and institutions of learning.
- ix. Business organizations should strive to provide more up-to-date office automations in the training of business education students on SIWES.
- x. Organized private sectors, government establishments and other related organizations should be encouraged to accept business education student for training in their establishments.
- xi. Employers should also be encouraged to make provision for temporary accommodation for students trainees during their training to eliminate the issue of accommodation problem.
- xii. It is also recommended that institutions should release funds for the payment of stipend to trainees to ease off the problem of inadequate fund on students.

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