

**THE ROLE OF SIWES IN ENHANCING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE  
STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this research work is to determine the role of Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in enhancing Library and Information Science (LIS) students' employment and employability skills. The objectives of this research work include the following to: discuss the concept and benefits of IT/SIWES to LIS students, find out the employable skills enhanced through SIWES, find out the challenges limiting the achievement of SIWES, and identify the strategies for enhancing SIWES effectiveness and efficiency. The study found that: the industrial training in organizations enhances effectiveness of individuals involved, and leads to job satisfaction of employees. In conclusion, industrial training enhances effectiveness of individuals involved. The researchers therefore recommends that, the period allotted to IT/SIWES should be increased, there should be effective monitoring and supervision of both supervisors and students, there should be better placement strategies. Organizations should always accept students for SIWES and students should be placed in their areas of discipline within the industry for training; and the allowance given to students should be increased and paid during the period of students' industrial work experience scheme (SIWES). This would help them to at least cater for some of their financial needs for the period of their training.

**Keywords:** Training, SIWES, Skills, Library and Information Science Students

**Introduction**

Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a skill development programme established by Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1973 with the headquarter in Jos, Nigeria. It was purposely introduced to enable students of tertiary institution to acquire technical skills and experience for professional development in their course of study. The purpose of the scheme is to planned, supervised, trained and to carry out intervention programmed based on stated and specific learning and career objectives leading to the development of occupational competencies of the participants. The scheme also help to acquaint students with works ethics and expose them to the necessary experience to hand equipments and machinery that are not available in their institutions.

The beneficiaries of this training programme include library and information science students who could learn various library skills such as cataloguing skills, classification skills,

abstracting skills, indexing skills, book production skills etc. However, despite the importance of SIWES in professional development of students, the following has been discovered as some of the factors affecting SIWES training today; some employers reject SIWES students, inadequate supervision of students by some institutions, lack of finance for the smooth running of the scheme, inadequate SIWES orientation programmes, some technical activities in the library such as indexing, compilation of bibliography, book production etc are facing setback due to inadequate practical experience of the LIS students as it relates to their professional development. This observation actually has prompted this research work.

The establishment of Industrial Training (IT) is for some purposes to be fulfilled. Drucker (2003), stated that the aim of industrial training is to help the organization achieve their purpose by adding value to its key resource- the people it employs, to increase productivity and quality, to promote versatility, adaptability to new methods, to reduce the number of accidents, to reduce the number of turnover, to increase job satisfaction displaying itself in lower labor turnover and less absenteeism and increase efficiency. Baker (2005), opined that the purpose of IT include the following: to improve interpersonal communication, leadership and team work, to develop innovativeness and creativity; to address personal growth and prevent obsolescence; to improve organizational climate, to improve health and safety of personnel, to increase quality and productivity and to help an individual fulfil his/her future personal needs.

Training helps to impact new skills and old skills are enhanced, sharpened and properly refined to enhance effectiveness. It enables employees to develop and rise within organization. Besides, training helps employees to increase their market value, earning power and job security. Training is not only to train the workers physically and mentally for the sake of the organization but also it is a fertile media for graduation of many skilled people (Ismael et al. 2021). It is an experience, a discipline or a regimen that causes employees to acquire new, pre-determined behaviors. Training is a continuous process of acquiring specific skill, talent and knowledge of an employee in order to achieve the predetermined goal and objectives (Kearney, 2010). Training is also considered as education and instructions given to the employee at any time needed to improve their current status of skills and information for a better outcome (Anwar and Abd Zebari, 2015).

Without an effective training, employees cannot manage their business in a proper and standard way (Anwar and Surarchith, 2015). In other words, training is a series of activities given to the employees with efforts to change their own way of thinking and their current knowledge about specific issues (Othman et al. 2019). Training is any attempt to improve current or future worker productivity through learning by increasing the worker's ability to perform (Salau, et al., 2014) usually by changing the workers' attitude or increasing skills and knowledge. Therefore, a successful training programme must contribute to the growth and development of the competencies (Valle, Martin, Romero and Dolan, 2000) and activation of employees (Rothwell & Kazanas, 2004). The Students Industrial training is a skill 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.

Industrial training is the practical training undergo by professional students in firm related to their field of study after the students had spent sometimes or duration in the classroom.

This enables students to experience the practical aspect of their chosen profession in practice (Oloruntoba et al. 2022) quoting (Agbo et al. Thus, IT is necessary in professional fields particularly in librarianship, thus experience had shown that the philosophy of information professionalism taught in classrooms do not encompass the comprehensiveness of the needed skill exercise in the actual practice. As such, the needed skills for effective information professionalism training cannot be achieved fully in the classroom alone. Therefore, the earlier introduction of practical skill to the students in the internship programs will help bake the trainees in having better understanding of their profession and its practice. By the end of the training process, students are turned into professionals in their field of area.

Now he can work around with people and tackle any kind of problem and can handle them efficiently. Some of the benefits of having industrial training from professionals are Industrial training is provided to the students so that they are capable to implementing the subjects practically, It also helps the student in improving their knowledge, It improves the versatility of the student and helps them in boosting their career and It also boosts their confidence once they have the skills about the particular subject they have got training in. ([softsystemsolutiontraining](#) 2015).

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

The students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a skill Training programme designed to expose and prepare students of Education, Agriculture, Engineering, Technology, Environmental, Science, Medical Sciences and Pure and Applied Science for the Industrial Work situation which they likely to meet after graduation. Duration of SIWES is four months in Polytechnics at the end of ND, four months in College of Education at the end of NCE II and six months in the Universities at the end of 300 or 400 or 500 levels depending on the discipline (Information and Guideline for SIWES, 2002). SIWES is a system which provide tertiary-level students with the opportunity of gaining practical-based work experience in relation and addition to what they have learnt in school within the time framework of their undergraduate tutelage (Akinloye, 2019).

Before the inception of SIWES in 1973, there was clear evidence of inadequacy in the practical exposure of students in Universities and Polytechnics and this posed serious challenges to both the quality and standard of Engineering and Technology Education in our nation. This inadequacy became a serious threat to the industrial and technological growth of the country as industries and establishment found our graduates unsuitable for employment without undertaking industrial training. In recognition of this gap, the Federal Government through the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) which was established by decree 47 of 1971, therefore introduced the Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in 1973 Mafe (2009), presented the reasons for the need of Industrial training.

According to this author, theoretical knowledge alone would not usually prepare an educated person for the present day world of work. Being knowledgeable alone is not enough for a worker or a productive individual. Such must also be versatile in the application of skills to lay hands on defined jobs or work. Mafe illustrated the reality of the foregoing by using a simple analogy. He is of the opinion that while it is possible for someone to learn and imbibe all the available information on driving a car in the classroom, it is unlikely that the individual would, depending on this knowledge alone, be able to drive a car at the first opportunity. On the other hand, someone else without the theoretical information on how to drive a car, on being told and shown what to do, followed by hands-on practice and supervision by an instructor, would at the end of the day be able to drive a car successfully.

Someone who has been exposed to both the theoretical underpinnings of driving a car and the hands-on experience of doing so would and should be a better driver. Akinloye (2019) thus submitted

that the productive individual who will thrive particularly in this millennium, must be able to combine and utilize the outcomes from the two forms of learning (Know-How Ability and Do-How Capability) for the production of goods and services. This implies that it is neither enough to have practical knowledge alone nor theoretical knowledge. But both must work hand in hand for the best experience in the world of work.

### **The Benefits of SIWES**

This scheme was not just put to place without a purpose. The scheme (SIWES) according to Mafe (2006) was established to bridge the gap between theories and the knowledge acquired by students in institutions of higher learning on one hand and the practical industrial work on the other hand. The scheme can therefore be seen as a practical supplement to the gap in skills acquisition, as it provides the student with the opportunity of familiarizing their hand and getting exposed to the needed experience in handling of machinery and equipment that are usually not available in educational institutions. The scheme is also aimed at minimizing the destructive handling of employers' machinery and equipment during the student's early contact days in post-graduation employment as well as promoting the much desired technological know-how for the advancement of the nation.

It is also meant to enlist and strengthen employers' involvement in the entire educational process of preparing students for employment in industries. In view of the aforementioned importance of SIWES, the Federal Government included it in almost all professionally based courses in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. To accomplish this, decree 16 of 1985 was promulgated which states that "All students of specialized Engineering, Technology, Business, Applied Science or Applied Arts Program shall be required to have compulsory supervised industrial attachment as part of their regular studies in such manner as may be prescribed by collaborating agencies.

### **Employable Skills of LIS Students Enhanced through SIWES**

Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme is a skill development program designed to expose and prepare students for real work in which they are likely to meet in their various discipline after graduation from school. This scheme was introduced in Nigeria by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1973, to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This is to say that, SIWES was introduced to enable Nigeria students in the tertiary institutions of higher learning, to match their theoretical school

knowledge with the practical aspect of their training in the work industry. The information profession has experience increasingly rapid changes in the past decades. The origin of this change could be traced to the shift in context of technology, social, economic and educational, the traditional practices of information profession role has experience massive changes.

In other word, this has brought about new roles in the profession. Roxanne (2006), citing Glendothir, submits that we are no longer just the ‘guardians of books’ we are information providers in an environment that is constantly changing and where information need to be gathered quickly and effectively. Besides, our mission is to provide service for the ever increasing amount of information. He concluded by saying that whether we like it or not, information technology has changed our jobs. It is therefore very paramount to plan and ensure a vibrant and effective future workforce. There is need to understand the skills need by the next generation of library and information science professionals. Hallam and Partridge (nd.) opine that skills in education and training has relates attributes which can be adopted to build a new dialogue between education and employers. These skills are categorized into two as follows:

1. Professional information skills
2. Generic skills

From the above work, Raxanne (2006) takes the interrelationship of both generic and professional skills as basis and proposes for new generic skills for LIS profession environment. He describes these skills in terms of application in the workforce providing examples; and discusses how the skills can be more widely developed through education and training. These four skill are summarized as follows:

Skill1: Mountain climbing

Skill2: Jumping

Skill3: Orienteering

Skill4: Endurance

### **Challenges of SIWES on the Employable Skills/ Occupational competences of business education students.**

Despite the reasonable goals of the IT for its establishment, it is pretty clear that there exist noticeable challenges facing students' industrial work experience scheme which impede the fulfillment of its objectives. According to Anyaeneh and Ochuba (2019), these challenges include the following:

**1. Finance:** which affects certain aspects of its operation like students' supervision and payment of allowances to participants. On the side of the students, students arrange for their own accommodation which is a constraint due to the financial implications of getting a convenient place for them. Effah, Bomphong, Adu, Anokye & Asamoah (2014);

**2. Placement of students**

**3. Location of IT Company and student's residence:** this is another problem facing the achievement of the goals of establishing SIWES. There is the problem of some students wanting to choose places of attachment by themselves for reasons of 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 (Ojokuku, Emeahara, Aboyade, & Chris-Israel, 2015). Besides, this option by students may be due to financial consideration of shuttling between the company location and the various homes.

4. Duration of IT programme: shortness of time allotted to industrial training sometimes makes it impossible to acquire the needed practical skills needed by the participating student. This shortness of the industrial training period barrier makes it difficult for trainees to have sufficient industry exposure (Karunaratne & Perera, 2015);

5. Apportioning of other assignments other than the primary objectives to IT students. And conflict between what is taught to students and what obtains in the industries

6. Students reporting late at their places of assignment due to inability to secure the right places of attachment when they were posted,

7. Rejection of students by some organization;

8. Inadequate/poor supervision of students; some students do not receive training throughout the period due to inadequacy of facilities for training of the attachee.

9. Unwillingness or lack of commitment by companies'/establishment staff to expose the students to the required skills and training needed, some of the industry based supervisors may be hostile to the students and may not be ready to help the students to learn. And Bukaliya

(2012), posits that unfriendliness of industry workers towards trainees, who for fear of losing their jobs to trainees are unwilling to provide in-depth training to them.

10. Other barriers include restriction of trainees from accessing machinery and equipment, high cost of undergoing the programme, lack of training materials, and lack of appropriate skills among professionals among others (Karunaratne & Perera, 2015)

### **Strategies for Enhancing Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) For Improved Library and Information Students' Employment and Employability Skills**

A number of strategies that could enhance SIWES have been identified. It is hoped that SIWES will yield the expected result if training is channeled to developing trainees' skills by exposing them to creativity based learning projects and presentation skills, team work activities and managerial skills. The following as suggested by Oladimeji et al (2017), are some of the solutions or strategies for enhancing SIWES;

1. Proper Coordination and Supervision of the Exercise by various bodies involved in the management of the SIWES exercise i.e. Federal Government, Industrial Training Fund (ITF), NUC, NBTE and NCCE.
2. The various bodies involved in the management of the SIWES programme should liaise with the various industries ahead of time so as to minimize or reduce to the bare rest minimum the high level of refusal to accept students for their industrial training.
3. Issuing of Log Books/IT Letters in time: The log books used by the student during the industrial training period and the IT letters should be issued to the students in time.
4. The various institutions should endeavour to employ experts in the areas of career development to manage the student's industrial placement centres
5. Timely payment of SIWES allowance to students Bukaliya (2012) add that the SIWES period should not be too short if trainees are to benefit maximally from it. In fact, respondents in a study by Mihail in Ijeoma, Anthonia & Fidelia (2017) were of the view that the training period should range between 6 and 9 months instead of 3 months.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**



SIWES exposes library and information students to new work methods and experience needed in handling equipment and facilities which are not available in the school but needed to perform certain jobs. With the help of SIWES, LIS students were able to bridge the gap between knowledge acquired in the school and the relevant practical skills required in work places. Hence for LIS students to be professionally and competently trained in their course of studies, the initiators of the scheme need to develop a better approach that will face out the challenges faced by the students during the course of their studies. Therefore, From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The period allotted IT/SIWES should be increased.
2. There should be serious monitoring and supervision of both supervisors and students.
3. There should be better placement strategies. Organizations should always accept students for SIWES and students should be placed in their areas of discipline within the industry for training.
4. The allowance given to students should be increased and paid during the period of students' industrial work experience scheme (SIWES). This would help them to at least cater for some of their financial needs for the period of their training.

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