SIWES: AN IMPERATIVE FOR NATION DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a skill development programme established by Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1973. It is meant to enable students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria acquire technical skills and experience for professional development in their course of study so as to bridge the gap between theory and practice. SIWES is a skill training programme designed to inculcate and develop the aptitudes of students to make them specialists and self – dependent in their disciplines. Being a descriptive article, the present study used data from secondary sources to analyze and synthesize roles of SIWES in national development. By synthesizing SIWES activities, this study identifies factors responsible for the dysfunction of SIWES in Nigeria. The study assessed the importance of Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme on National development in Nigeria. The research takes a comprehensive approach, in examining both the direct and indirect contributions of this programme to the National development. The study highlighted several contributions of Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme on national development. It was recommended that the SIWES be strictly monitored by relevant agencies to help the students acquire the required industrial skills and experience in their various course of study so as to be self-reliance and not a job seeker. This will go a long to increase the country GDP and hence national development.

Keywords: SIWES, National Development, Skill, ITF, self-reliant, Imperative

Introduction

Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a skill development programme established by Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1973 with the headquarters in Jos Nigeria (ITF, 2021). It is meant to enable

students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria acquire technical skills and experience for professional development in their course of study as it bridges the gap between theory and practice. It is the accepted skills training programme in institutions of higher learning in Nigerian that forms part of the approved academic requirement in various degree programmes.

As stated by Nsu (2012), the scheme is a planned, supervised training and intervention programme based on stated and specific learning and career objectives, leading to the development of occupational competencies of the participants. It is

also to expose and prepare students in institutions of higher learning for the industrial work situations which they are to meet after graduation. The scheme equally helps to familiarize students with work methods and expose them to the necessary experience to handle equipment and machinery that are not available in their institutions (Sergeeva, 2019).

SIWES is also an effort to bridge the existing gap between theory and practice and expose students to necessary skills for smooth transition from the classroom to the world of work (Sapril, *et al., 2018*). It enables students to acquire technical skills and experience for professional development in their study. Before the inception of the Scheme, there was a growing concern among Nigerian industrialists that graduates of institutions of higher learning lacked adequate practical background experience necessary for employment. So, employers were of the opinion that the theoretical education provided by higher institutions did not meet nor satisfy the needs of the economy (Serpa & Sa, 2019). It was against this background that the ITF during its formative years introduced SIWES to provide students with the opportunity of exposure to handle equipments and machineries in industries to enable them acquire prerequisite practical knowledge and skills (ITF, 2021). These skills aimed at exposing students to professional work methods as the scheme (SIWES) acts as a catalyst for industrial growth and productivity through professional development (Okwelle, 2013).

The Scheme started in 1974 in 11 institutions of higher learning with 748 participants. By 1978, it has widened in scope to about 5,000 participants from 32 different institutions in the country. In Nigeria SIWES is financed by the federal government (through the ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment) and managed by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) aiming at making education more relevant and also to bridge the yearning gap between theory and practice of Engineering, Technology and other practically related disciplines in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The bodies involved in SIWES operations are known as the stakeholders and these are the Federal Government of Nigeria (through the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment), Industrial Training Fund, NUC/NBTE/NCCE, the institutions, the industries or employers and the students. Mafe (2020) stated that all stakeholders are involved in the operations of SIWES but students are the key factors that are directly involved in its implementation, all other stakeholders have lesser role to play in the actual training process. Mafe (2020) citing Crag (1987) stated that, SIWES is generic because it cuts across more than 60 programmes in the universities, over 40 programmes in the polytechnics and about 10 programmes in the colleges of education. Students who participate in this training programme include those studying Library and Information Science, Engineering, Vocational, Technological and practically related courses in institution of higher learning. Other courses involved in SIWES include Agricultural science, Forestry, Industrial Chemistry, Microbiology, Geology and Mineral Science, Physics, Plant and Environmental Biology,

Computer Science, Tourism and Hospitality, Business Education, Industrial Engineering, Enterprise Creation and Management.

National development

National, according to Longman dictionary of contemporary English, refers to a phenomenon that embraces a whole nation. National development therefore can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. This is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government (Akure, 2018).

National Development Plans in Nigeria

We have had series of developmental plans in Nigeria. Nigeria is permanently hunted by these spectra of developmental plans. After sixty four years of independence, we are still in search of master plan for National development. The myth of growth and development is so entrenched, that the country's history passes for the history of development strategies and growth models from colonial times up to date. Nigeria is a nation where virtually all notions and models of development have been experimented (Klim, 2019).

Two years after independence, the first National Development Plan policy was formulated between 1962 and 1968 with the objectives of development opportunities in health, education and employment and improving access to these opportunities, etc. This plan failed because fifty percent of resources needed to finance the plan was to come from external sources, and only fourteen percent of the external finance was received (Mling, *et al.,* 2019). Collapse of the first Republic and the commencement of civil war also disrupted this plan.

After the civil war in 1970, the second national development plan 1970 to 1974 was launched, the plan priorities were in agriculture, industry, transport, manpower, defence, electricity, communication and water supply and provision of social services (Zamiralova, *et al.,* 2019).

The third plan, covering the period of 1975 to 1980 was considered more ambitious than the second plan. Emphasis was placed on rural development and efforts to revamp agricultural sector.

The fourth plan 1981 to 1985 recognized the role of social services, health services, etc. The plan was aimed at bringing about improvement in the living conditions of the people. The specific objectives were to increase in the real income of the average citizen and increased dependence on the country's material and human resources, as a way to reduce the level of unemployment and underemployment (Tolu, 2016). During these periods, Nigeria's enormous oil wealth was not invested to build a viable industrial base for the country but instead the oil money was used to for launching an agrarian revolution to liquidate mass poverty. However, the Green Revolution Programme that replaced Operation Feed the Nation failed to generate enough food for the masses.

In the recent past, various strategies for development have also been tried with little or no

result; among these were the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Vision 2010, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), seven point agenda of Yardua administration with vision 2020, all which had no clear methodological approach towards achieving their goals or objectives. It is obvious that the current results so far are not what development connotes.

Strategies for National Development

The beauty of any development plan is the faithful implementation of such plan, which its success lies with the implementers. In our previous discussion, it was mentioned that most of the past development plans failed as a result of implementation problem and lack of committed leadership etc. Based on this fact, new development policies and strategies are put in place as alternative strategies for development, such as Seven Points Agenda, Vision 2020, etc. These policies and vision appear to be all embracing but they are not sacrosanct in their totality. But if faithfully implemented, the nation at least will move towards path of development. It is in my opinion that to successfully implement National development plan, there some lessons we can learn from Asian models of development.

First, development requires total commitment on the parts of the leadership. The need for discipline and honesty on the part of the project implementers cannot be compromised; such officials should show enough discipline, interest, willingness, dedication and honesty. Without these attributes and the will to pursue set economic goals, all other ingredients of development present would amount to nullity.

Second, this country should learn that wholesale liberalization; the type advocated by the apologists of orthodox SAP is not necessarily synonymous with development. It goes without saying therefore that a level of state involvement (heterodoxy) is imperative even in the face of the crucial need for structural adjustment. But whatever the degree of state involvement, private ownership of properties must be guaranteed for investment to get stimulated.

Also, stability and continuity of policies encourage investment and propel development. For instance, in Korea, when Park was assassinated, his policies remained and were building on. Nigeria leadership must learn to build on policies rather than to jettison them for new ones for the sake of party politics and personal aggrandizement. There is the need for Nigeria to revamp the agricultural sector; this sector was instrumental in the development of Japan. Agriculture used to be the mainstay of Nigeria economy but the discovery of crude oil succeeded in putting agriculture into state of oblivion.

Human resources development is also a sine qua non to Nigeria national development; this was demonstrated in Japan and Korea (Tolu *et al.*, 2011). Development depends very much on human knowledge and skills. This must be such that a high quality of education and training is achieved for a large majority at a reasonable price and the context and quality of such education and training should be relevant and adequate to the country's development needs. Literature on development stresses the axiom

that it is the people who develop and that unless there are large numbers of suitably qualified people, development cannot take place (Kyunghwa & Heyjin, 2019). There is need for attitudinal change.

Real development is achieved through internal activities rather than from external influences. Development is seen as a process generated within a society by forces propagated and invigorated by the actual members of that society. It is believed that true development can neither be started nor sustained by outsiders. Although, no country can develop in isolation, but heavy emphasis should not be placed on foreign resources for the country's development. The models of development of Japan and China show how these countries utilize their internal resources both human and material for rapid economic development. It is reasonable that Nigerians should inculcate a high sense of patriotism as demonstrated by the Japanese and Chinese. Importantly, citizenship should be promoted over indignity in order to achieve cooperation and participation of all communities in the development process.

Muhamamdu (2019) noted that the 1999 constitution is directly or indirectly promoting indignity in the country. For example, section 318(1) of paragraph (IV) supports indignity. The constitution sets parameters for indigenes and non-indigenes. It equally gives legal bases to various discriminatory policies that actively promote indignity, contrary to some sections that argue against discrimination. This is very contradictory. Leadership in Nigeria must behave in a way to inculcate the spirit of patriotism in the minds of the people, so that they will be ready to stand with the government in her development efforts.

Lastly, development plan should not be exclusively regarded as economic issue it should be seen as holistic and encompassing national issue that cuts across economic, social, political and psychological aspects of human endeavour.

Roles of SIWES in National Development

a. SIWES gives the students avenue to acquire industrial skills and experience in their various course of study so as to be self-reliance and not a job seeker but employers of labour. This goes a long to increase the country GDP and hence national development
b. During SIWES programme students from different socio-political zones have the chance to work together thereby promoting national integration.
c. SIWES gives the students exposure on methods and techniques in handling equipment's and machineries so that when empowered by any of these governments' poverty alleviation programmes, they can set up their own business concern and increase their per capital income.
d. SIWES give the students inspiration of being a job provider rather than job seeker which make the transition from school to the world of work easier. "This will promote I can do it spirit" when effective harmonized it can lead

to national development in Nigeria by promoting indigenization of the country.

e. Most of the participants of SIWES are youths who upon graduation are employer of labour and not job seekers. When youth are gainfully employed, this helps to curb youth social vices and restlessness.

f. SIWES prevent underemployment and unemployment by providing employable graduates for both private and public service.

be self-reliance, promoting national unity, increasing per capital income of the nation and curbing youth social vices.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will help to achieve the roles of SIWES in national development:

1) There should be post attachment seminar to review the programme regularly.

2) The administrators of SIWES should organize orientation to industrial supervisors to fully understand the role they need to play in the student attachment programme.

3) Government should encourage the SIWES scheme by funding the programme adequately.

4) Government should grant tax relief and other incentives to private sector organizations who implement the SIWES programme satisfactorily.

This is a veritable tools for national development

Conclusion

Studies have shown a major concern for poor employability of the Nigerian graduates. The concern brought about the introduction of SIWES in tertiary institutions to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical training. SIWES can be a stimulus to Nation development by preparing the student graduates of tertiary institution in Nigeria to

5) There should be urgent need for ITF to revise and articulate the follow-up study and the supervision industrial work experience scheme to enable students, institutions and industries (experts) effectively participate in the simulation exercise of the SIWES programme.

6) Administrators of SIWES in institution should make sure that students are placed in their areas of study within the industry for training.

7) The ITF should ensure the prompt payment of student allowance and supervisory allowance of supervisor in the institution. This will be a morale booster for the students and supervisors.

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