



## THE ROLE OF IT/SIWES IN PROMOTING NATIONAL UNITY AND INTEGRATION: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examined the role of Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in promoting National Unity and Integration. SIWES is as old as the pre-colonial era. SIWES was introduced by Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to bridge the gaps between theory and practice following the Nigeria Enterprises Promotion Decree popularly known as Nigeria Indigenization Decree of 1971. ITF was established in 1974 and brought under the Federal Ministry of Industry Trade and Investment, for the purpose of carrying out its mandate of training students on SIWES for the acquisition of skills for industrialization which will in turn boost the Nigeria economy. In many respects and aspects SIWES serves similar functions with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), in terms of promoting National Unity and Integration in Nigeria. It is expected that at the end of this rather brief presentation, the audience / readers will appreciate the staggering role of the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme in keeping Nigerians integrated and united as a nation, as isolationism is counter-productive and anti-development.*

### Keywords:

### INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) was established in 1974 and the Decree that established ITF has now become an Act of Parliament, as amended in 2011 (Abayeh, 2017). This is to ensure the development and acquisition of indigenous skills sufficient to meet the needs of the Nigeria economy.

- Pre-independence Nigerian state was characterized by white collar workers.
- Industrialization which is the Engine for economic growth and development, was manned by expatriates.
- No meaningful development can be achieved without requisite skills acquisition.
- At independence in 1960, the Nigerian economy was largely agrarian and lacked a vibrant industrial sector.
- After independence, the military led Federal Government decided to establish the Nigerian Local Development Board and the Department of Commerce and Industry.
- Any nation that fails to develop and utilize her human resource, will not only be backward in terms of industrialization and technological advancement, but will surely be condemned to perpetual poverty.
- Employers complained that Nigerian graduates bring sufficient theoretical knowledge to the job but they generally lack hands-on or practical skills and orientations that would make them productive.

- Consequently, SIWES was introduced by the Industrial Training Fund as a planned and structured program based on stated and specific career objectives which are geared towards developing the occupational competencies of participants.
- The need to ensure a strategic and result oriented implementation of SIWES cannot be overemphasized considering its pivotal role in ensuring adequate skills acquisition for industrialization towards economic development and sustainable technological growth in Nigeria.

### Mandate of ITF

The Enabling Law, now an Act of the National Assembly as amended to date, mandates the ITF to:

- (a) Provide, promote and encourage acquisition of skills.
- (b) Provide training for management, technical and entrepreneurial skills development.
- (c) Set standards for training and training facilities.
- (d) Evaluate and certify vocational skills of apprentices, craftsmen and technicians in collaboration with relevant organizations.

### **Note that, no Industrialisation without Skills!**

- A country's size, its natural resources, the skills of its people, the stability of its government and institutions and their ability to promote change, the fiscal, monetary, and exchange rate policies that the government pursues—all these and still more factors influence a country's ability to

industrialize. The reviewed strategies for the actualization of the mandate has been succinctly articulated by the Director General (Ari,2017) during the just concluded 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial SIWES National Conference (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> August 2017), where many papers were presented on different aspects of SIWES and the way forward.

- Any nation that fails to develop and utilize her human resource, will not only be backward in terms of industrialization and technological advancement, but will surely be condemned to perpetual poverty(Eke,2010)
- There was a yearning gap between the learning acquired by graduates of Nigeria's tertiary institutions (particularly science, engineering and technology graduates) and the skills repertoire required in the work place.

### Inception of SIWES

Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a derivative from cooperative education.

- Cooperative education was given various meanings and definitions in different parts of the world. Olawuni (1989) quoting the World Council on Cooperative Education gave a formal definition of cooperative education as:

**Cooperative Education defined...**“a strategy of applied learning which is a structured program developed and supervised by an educational institution in which relevant productive work is an integral part of an essential component of the final assessment for an award. Such program should commence and terminate within an academic period and the work experience component should comprise reasonable proportion of the total program”.

- There is no globally agreed definition on cooperative education as it is a skill given different names in several countries.
- In the United States of America, and Canada, this form of education is referred to as “sandwich education”. In the United Kingdom and other European countries, it is termed “Industrial Work Experience Scheme”. Others call it Industrial Training, Industrial Experience, Internship, Apprenticeship or Stagier.
- The ITF termed it “**Students’ Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)**”and National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) calls it “Industrial Training/Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme(IT/SIWES).
- The Industrial Training Fund established the Students’ Industrial Work Experience Scheme in 1974.

### The ITF SIWES

- ❖ SIWES is an inter-mix of theory and practice

designed to expose students of tertiary institutions to the world of work.

- ❖ It is a skills training program geared towards the preparation of students of the Universities, Polytechnics/Colleges of Education to real life work situation after graduation.
- ❖ The Scheme is for students studying Engineering, Sciences and Technology including Environmental, Agriculture, Technical and Business Studies in higher institutions in Nigeria.
- ❖ The much needed opportunity of being familiarized and exposed to experience in handling of machinery and equipment which are usually not available in the institutions is given to the students through SIWES.
- ❖ The Federal Government gave legal backing to the Scheme in 1985 with Decree No. 16 of August 1985 which states that:

*“all students enrolled in specialized engineering, technical, business, applied sciences and applied arts should have supervised industrial attachment as part of their studies”.*

### Why SIWES?

No Industrialization without Skills!



### Skills, Economic Growth and FDI

- Appropriate knowledge and market driven skills occupy the most potent sources of competitiveness and productivity to achieve highly sustainable economic growth and to create a congenial environment for foreign investment.





**ITF... Bridging the Skills Gap through SIWES**



The need to ensure a strategic and result oriented implementation of SIWES cannot be overemphasized considering its pivotal role in ensuring adequate skills acquisition for industrialization towards economic development and sustainable technological growth in Nigeria.



**Objectives of SIWES**

The ITF policy document No 1 of 1973 which established SIWES outlined the objectives as follows:

- Provide an avenue for students in institutions of higher learning to acquire industrial skills during their courses of study.
- Prepare students for industrial work situations they are likely to meet after graduation.
- Expose students to working methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery.
- Make the transition from school to world of work easier and enhance contacts for later job placements.



- Provide opportunities to apply the educational knowledge to real work situations, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice.



**Stakeholders in SIWES**

There are different stakeholders involved in the organization/implementation of SIWES, as elucidated by Ari (2017), they are as follows:

- Federal Government (through the Federal Ministry of Industry Trade and Investment)
- Industrial Training Fund
- Supervising/Regulatory Agencies (NUC, NBTC, NCCE).
- Tertiary Institutions (Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education)
- Employers of Labor, and
- Students.

## • Roles of Stakeholders in SIWES

### 1. Federal Government

- Provide adequate funds to ITF (through the Federal Ministry of Industry Trade and Investment).
- Make policies to guide and regulate the scheme at the National level.
- Make it mandatory for all Ministries, companies and parastatals to offer places for the attachment of students.

### 2. Industrial Training Fund (ITF)

- Formulate policies and guidelines on SIWES
- Conduct orientation programs for students
- Receive and process Master and Placement list from institutions and supervising agencies.
- Supervise and assess students' performance on attachment
- Disburse supervisory and students Allowances.
- Provide logistics and materials necessary for effective administration of the scheme, such documents as ITFForm8, ITF Form 8A, the Payment of Students, SPE 1 (Student Commencement of Attachment Form, SCAF) and Outstanding Student Allowance to be Paid through the Institution(now direct to students accounts through e-payment), SIP A Forms.
- Organize Biennial SIWES National Conference SIWES Review Meetings.
- Provide information on companies with opportunities for attachment.
- Vet and process students' logbooks and ITF Form 8.

### 3. The Supervising Agencies (NUC, NBTE and NCCE)

- Ensure the establishment and accreditation of SIWES units in institutions under their jurisdiction.
- Direct and ensure the appointment of full-time SIWES coordinators.
- Vet and approve Master and Placement Lists of students from participating Institutions and forward same to the ITF.
- Liaise with the ITF to ensure the implementation of all Federal Government Policies on the scheme.

### 4. The Institutions of Higher Learning

- Establish SIWES Coordinating Units.
- Appoint SIWES Coordinators and supporting

staff.

- Apply job specification as prepared for all the accredited courses and award appropriate credit units in accordance with the Federal Government minimum academic standard.
- Prepare and submit Master and Placement lists to coordinating agencies and ITF.
- Organize Orientation programs for Students in collaboration with the ITF.
- Supervise students on attachment and sign their logbooks at least two times during the period of attachment.
- Allocate credit loads to SIWES as recommended by the supervisory Agencies.
- Effect payments of allowances and render returns to the ITF.

### 5. The Employers of Labor

- Collaborate with Institutions in preparing job specifications for students.
- Accept students on Industrial attachment.
- Provide welfare service for students on attachment.
- Attach experienced staff to students for effective training and supervision.
- Allow students access to their facilities.
- Complete SPE 1 Form on behalf of students, sign, and stamp and return same to the ITF Area office.
- Grade students as provided for in the assessment form and ITF Form 8 at end of the program.
- Appoint Industry-based supervisors for students on attachment.

### 6. The Students

- Attend SIWES Institution Orientation program before going on attachment.
- Comply with rules and regulations of the organization.
- Documentation with respect to: SPE1 Form, Form 8, Logbook.
- Safety Precaution.

## DISCUSSION

From the foregoing, one could easily see that SIWES unites and integrates the nation through one or more of the roles of the stakeholders. For instance in looking for placement, there is no discrimination as to religion, tribe or ethnic group or state of origin or local government area. Acceptance and placement for IT/SIWES is based on ones course of pursuit and availability of vacancies in relevant, industries, organizations and other institutions. The

National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) was established by decree No.24 of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1973 and stated that the NYSC is being established “with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity,” ([www.nairaland.com/2175542/all-need-know-national-youth](http://www.nairaland.com/2175542/all-need-know-national-youth)). Like NYSC, one could undertake his IT/SIWES in any part of the country provided the job specifications are met by the employers. Also like NYSC, while some organizations give some stipend to the SIWES candidate (apart from the SIWES allowance from ITF for some approved programs) others did not give any stipend to SIWES candidates but the integration and unity of the nation are promoted through the exercise and experience. Also like NYSC, some candidates who do well and impress their employers during their Industrial Attachment are offered appointment, while some are promised appointment after completion of their course. In the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), we have many instances where our SIWES candidates get employment immediately or during their attachment since the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode of education as employed by NOUN allows one to work and learn. Under the ODL, distance is no barrier to learning. The only main period when ODL students must come together over a sustained period of time is during examination, and a times during facilitation.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that IT/SIWES helps in uniting and promoting National integration and the consequence of that is harmony, mutual trust and high and more sufficient productivity and an egalitarian society, because of this singular role of SIWES in uniting and promoting national integration, stakeholders should take the issues of SIWES more seriously. Isolationism is counter-productive and anti-development. The Federal Government should provide adequate funds for payment of both SIWES supervisors and students upon completion of their attachment. More programs should be included among those currently being funded, ITF should avoid delay in releasing supervision and student allowances upon completion. Any policies by ITF should be deliberately student friendly. The supervising agencies should ensure that the heads of higher institutions under them give adequate attention to the issues of SIWES. The Chief Executive Officers of higher institution should cooperate fully with all SIWES coordinators within their institutions. Just like in NYSC, employers of labor should as much as possible regardless of religion ethnicity, state of origin or gender, accept candidates seeking placement for SIWES. The students on their part should ensure full compliance with the rules and regulations of the organization in which they have been accepted for attachment for a period of time. They should particularly seek to impress their employers so that they can have higher prospects of retention and employment either while on the attachment or after graduation. Students should also remember that while on SIWES, they serve the vital roles of uniting, and

integrating the nation.

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