



Participation in Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES): an assessment of the feelings of University of Jos Pharmacy students

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Abstract

SIWES has been part of the training requirement of Pharmacy students at the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Jos, for a long time now. At inception, it was done during vacations until about ten years ago when it was incorporated into the semester period. This work was done to find out the feelings and acceptance of students of Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Jos on the current regime of its conduct in the Faculty. A structured questionnaire was administered to a cross section of students of the Faculty after they return from the programme and had presented their reports in the faculty between 2013 and 2015. Their responses were analysed. Students generally rated the SIWES as having high positive impact on their general performance but are not comfortable with the six-month attachment in which it is currently run and prefer it done during vacations. Students view their participation in the SIWES as beneficial and important but suggested modifications to the mode of conduct to ease the pressure of loaded work in the first semesters of their third and fourth professional years.

Keywords: Industrial training, Pharmacy students, Assessment of feelings

INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) was established by an act of the FGN no 47 of 1971 which came into effect on 8th October 1971. It was established to be the foremost skills training development organisation in Nigeria and one of the best in the world. The fund is a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industries. As a human resource development agency, the ITF is committed to continuous development of human capital to adequately advance human resource practices in Nigeria and accelerate the level of contribution to national development. The fund is utilized to promote

and encourage the acquisition of skills in industry or commerce with a view to generating a pool of indigenously trained manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the economy. The ITF act was amended in 2011(FGN 2011) which made changes to many parts of the act to increase the number of organisations contributing to the fund among others.

SIWES was established in 1973 (Nse 2012, Mafe, 2010) as part of the mandate of ITF with the aim of bridging the yawning gap between theory and practice of engineering, technology and science-related disciplines in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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SIWES is a skill development programme designed to prepare students of Universities, Polytechnics/Monotechnics and Colleges of Education for transition from the college environment to work (Akerejola, 2008). Oyedele (1990) stated that work experience is an educational programme in which students participate in work activities while attending school, giving students opportunity to be part of an actual work situation outside the classroom.

Training is a key factor in enhancing the efficiency and expertise of the workforce. According to Ochiagha (1995), practical knowledge is learning without which mastery of an area of knowledge may be too difficult to achieve. The SIWES is a planned and supervised training intervention based on stated and specific learning and carrier objectives, and geared towards developing the occupational competencies of the participants.

SIWES forms part of the approved academic requirements for the award of B. Pharm degree at the faculty of Pharmaceutical sciences of the University of Jos and has been part of the training requirement of Pharmacy students at this institution for a very long time now. Until recently, it did not carry any credit unit and was run during the long vacation preceding entry into the final year. It is now run for six unbroken months covering a period including the second semester of 400L. This obviously has led to series of adjustments in course distribution and calendar in the faculty with both staff and students arguing for and against the need for changes in the way SIWES is run in the Faculty. Ironically, this argument had continued to deny the inclusion of specific credit unit for SIWES in the Faculty handbook (UJ, 2006-2009) until this was done in the 2012/2013 session with an assigned credit unit of 6 (UJ, 2012-2013).

Academic programmes need periodic review to accommodate emerging trends and challenges. This paper attempts to gather and

highlight the opinions of students on the current 6-month duration of SIWES and to identify areas that limit the actualisation of the objectives of SIWES programme at the Faculty.

METHOD

A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to students of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Jos who have undertaken the programme. Same questionnaire was administered to some academic staff of the faculty who had at least supervised SIWES students once under the current curriculum.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts, part one covered the respondents' demographics and the second part consisted of closed and open ended questions regarding their opinions on how the programme was currently run. The questionnaire was administered to a cross section of the students returning from SIWES after they had presented their IT reports in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Responses of completed questionnaires returned were entered into a Microsoft excel spreadsheet. The responses were coded and transferred into the SPSS spreadsheet and analysed.

RESULTS

Age and sex distribution of respondents. A total of 64, 67 and 74 completed questionnaires were returned and found analyzable in 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively. This is made up of 57% male and 43% female all with an average of (25.11 ± 2.61) (Table 1.).

Respondents' assessment of SIWES programme in the Faculty. Majority (59%) of the students considered the programme very needful and rated the impact high just as 57% were not satisfied with the way it is run. A higher (74%) percent of them regarded the allowance paid to them as not adequate while 2% of them reported that that the SIWES has

no impact on students. 32% reported that the SIWES programme is not convenient for students (Table 2.).

Suggestions for programme improvement.

Thirty-eight percent of the students suggested that SIWES should be broken down to be taken piecemeal during semester and or sessional breaks while 5% of respondents did not see any need for the SIWES programme for pharmacy students. Sixteen percent of the

students proposed an increase and prompt payment of the allowance (Table 3).

Students' description of effects or non-effects of non-participation in SIWES.

Eighty-six percent of the students reported they stand to lose something substantial if they fail to participate in the SIWES programme with 45% stating lack of practical experience and 8% stating lack of confidence in practice among others.

Table 1. Students' sex and age distribution

Year	Male	Female	20-25yrs (23.45±1.46)	26-33yrs (27.72±1.72)	Adult
2013	33	30	25	19	1
2014	35	30	30	15	0
2015	48	25	25	18	9
Total	116(57%)	85(42%)	80(39%)	52(25%)	10(5%)

Table 2. Students' general assessment of the SIWES programme

		2013	2014	2015	Total (%)
Needs assessment for SIWES	Very needful	41	40	39	120(59%)
	Needful	21	25	32	78(39%)
	Not needful	0	2	2	4(2%)
Allowance paid to them	Very adequate	10	5	3	18(9%)
	Adequate	5	11	13	29(16%)
	Not adequate	42	48	45	135(74%)
Their rating of impact of SIWES	Very high	24	9	26	59(29%)
	High	34	44	41	119(59%)
	Low	5	11	5	21(10%)
	No impact	1	1	2	4(2%)
Their view on its convenience	Very convenient	17	13	10	40(20%)
	Convenient	29	28	41	98(48%)
	Not convenient	18	25	26	66(32%)
If satisfied with the way SIWES is run	Yes	23	34	29	86(43%)
	No	40	33	43	116(57%)
Whether they recommend same to others	Yes	50	47	53	150(73%)
	No	5	7	12	24(12%)
	Undecided	9	12	9	30(15%)

Table 3. Suggestions students made for improvement of SIWES programme in the Faculty

Thematics suggested	Frequency (%)
There is need for increase and prompt payment of SIWES allowance	16(15%)
Let SIWES be done during 200L, 300L and 400L sessional breaks	21(20%)
Let SIWES be done during 300L and 400L breaks	19(18%)
Students should be properly supervised during the programme	13(13%)
SIWES should be more coordinated with defined objectives known to industries and students	7(7%)
Placement locations should not be restricted as it is the case now	6(6%)
Industries should not use students as sales boys/girls rather than train them	3(3%)
Others	14(13%)
Students of Pharmacy do not need SIWES in their training	5(5%)

Table 4. Effects or non-effects of non-participation in SIWES as reported by respondents

Whether students stand to lose anything by their non-participation in SIWES	Reasons advanced by the students	Frequency (%)
What students stand to lose by not participating in SIWES (86% of respondents)	They will lack practical experience	87(45%)
	They will lack knowledge of branded drugs	17(9%)
	They will lack early prior exposure to what the profession entails	13(7%)
	They will not have confidence in practice upon graduation	15(8%)
	They will lack clinical experience	13(7%)
	Their eyes will not be opened to the world of pharmacy	4(2%)
	They will lack interpersonal relationship with other health practitioners	2(1%)
	Others	5(3%)
	Ill-defined responses	10(5%)
Why students stand to lose nothing by not participating in SIWES (14% of respondents)	There is internship which is enough for practical experience	10(5%)
	Effective clinical postings and ward rounds is better than SIWES	9(5%)
	Practical experience can be gained during practice	4(2%)
	There is nothing to lose as students have been performing well before the introduction of SIWES	2(1%)
	With sessional postings, courses will be taken normally with improved performance	2(1%)

Table 5. Programme assessment by students who reported not to have lost anything by not participating in SIWES

		Internship is enough exposure	Clinical rounds is enough	Practical/clinical experiences can be gained in practice	Others
Rating of SIWES impact	Very high	0	0	0	1
	High	6	6	3	2
	Low	3	2	1	1
	No impact	1	0	0	0
Convenience of SIWES as it is run	Very convenient	2	0	2	2
	Convenient	4	4	1	0
	Not convenient	4	5	1	2
Whether satisfied with SIWES conduct	Yes	2	2	3	0
	No	7	7	1	3

Fourteen percent reported that they stand to lose nothing substantial by their nonparticipation with 5% pointing out that internship is enough exposure for experience and 5% stating that effective clinical posting and ward rounds give better exposure (Table 4).

Programme assessment by students who reject SIWES participation for Pharmacy students: Sixty-five percent of the

subcategory who reported they stood to lose nothing substantial gave an average rating of the impact of SIWES on students' performance in class, 44% reported the running of SIWES as not convenient and another 72% are not satisfied generally with the conduct of SIWES programme in the Faculty (Table 5).

DISCUSSION

Majority of the students who completed and returned their questionnaires were aged between 20-33 years, while a few simply identified their ages as 'adult'. There were more males than females who participated in the study. The impact of participation in the SIWES was generally rated high and the participation very needful. However, most students are not satisfied with the way it is run especially the timing and duration of the attachment. This may be due to the inconveniences experienced by students when second semester courses had to be redistributed to accommodate the six months programme.

Empirical observations of students' rating of the impact of SIWES on students' performance declined over the years with less percentage of students considering the programme needful. Student tend to be poorly motivated towards the programme and this may be due to the excess workload in the first semester 400L and the high credit unit assigned to SIWES which hinder some of them from registering all courses at this level with attendant consequences on their chances of passing all registered courses. These agree with the submission of some students in this study that students' performance was generally better in the old order of SIWES participation because course-credit lectures were taken as and when due.

Students consider the IT allowance not adequate and payment is often delayed. This appears to be a systemic problem as same problem was highlighted in a paper by Mafe 2010, who pointed out that delays in payments and sometimes non-payment of the students can discourage student participation. Poor coordination and supervision were other problems observed by students. Some industries turn students into sales boy/girl, a practice which is encouraged by poor institutional supervision of students on the field.

Other challenges reported by students include restriction of location for placement by the institution and sometimes refusal of placement institutions to accept students placed in their industry. A similar challenge has been reported by (Nse 2012). There is therefore a need for ITF to invoke the penalties entrenched in the ITF (amendment) decree 1990 (F.G. 1990) in order to get the cooperation of employers in the training of students.

Academic staff that completed the questionnaires and returned them expressed that they were not comfortable with the SIWES programme in the Faculty in general and were not satisfied with the way it was being run in particular. More than two third of the respondents considered the SIWES as not needful for pharmacy students and rate its impact on students' academic performance as very low and that students stand to lose nothing substantial by not participating in the programme because they have a full year of internship to gain experience.

Most of the staff respondents opined that SIWES as part of the pharmacy programme should be run during vacations or incorporated into the internship programme. These experiences made them not to recommend the programme for other schools of pharmacy. These responses and observations of the staff concur with that of the students. Whatever inconveniences is experienced by lecturers with any academic programme, it is likely to have a ripple effect on the students who undergo the programme. This evaluation has shown that both the students and their lecturers are on the same page rejecting the SIWES programme in the course-credit system being run at the faculty of pharmaceutical sciences, University of Jos.

Overall, students who learnt during the SIWES recounted what they would have missed if they had not participated while those who did not see a need for the SIWES advanced their reasons and suggested better

alternatives to the SIWES. These submissions by the students stem from the different experiences they went through during the programme. One thing that cannot be disputed is the skills and competencies which accrued to students who conscientiously participated in the SIWES. These remain part of them as life-long assets that cannot be taken away because knowledge and skills acquired through training are internalised and become relevant when required to perform jobs or functions (Mafe 2009)

Conclusion. SIWES participation exposes the students to the environment in which they will eventually work thus enabling them to see how their future profession is organised in practice. Students rate the impact of SIWES on their performance high and needful. Pharmacy students in the Faculty generally accept the SIWES participation but reject the way it is being conducted. We submit that a review and implementation of the students' observations and suggestions will provide the motivational incentives that will drive students' conscientious participation towards actualizing the ideals of the programme.

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