

Effective Implementation of TVET—Industry Partnership for Employability of Graduates through Work Integrated Learning in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

This study is centered on the implementation of work integrated learning by Nigerian universities in partnership with industries. Descriptive survey method was adopted for the study and 45-item structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 117 TVET lecturers in universities that offer TVET courses in South-Eastern Nigeria. The results of the study showed that work integrated learning is implemented to low extent by the universities, and the implementation is constrained by many factors such as poor teacher quality, lack of policy and curriculum provisions for work integrated learning experiences and activities. Many strategies that can enhance the implementation of TVET-based work integrated learning by Nigeria universities were also identified. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government, TVET institutions and other stakeholders should give more support and encouragement for effective implementation of work integrated learning by universities in Nigeria in partnership with industries.

Keywords: employability, WIL (Work Integrated Learning), TVET, partnership, higher education

1. Introduction

The high rate of unemployment and other economic hardship in developing countries like Nigeria have become of great concern. Although various government interventions have been in place in Nigeria to alleviate the problem of unemployment and poverty among the citizens, many graduates of different educational levels especially the tertiary level stay at home several years after graduation without a living job. This scenario cuts across all disciplines including Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). TVET graduates who are supposed to be equipped in knowledge and skill for the world of work are not even left out in this evil of unemployment. According to UNESCO-UNEVOC and NBTE (2012), many TVET delivery and approaches to advance skill development for graduates have always been advocated for youths in African Region with the objective to enhance economic, technical and social development in the region. TVET programs should aim to offer chances for employability of graduates. This is achievable through workplace-based/practical training. The workplace-based training is more possible through an enduring partnership between TVET institutions and industry. TVET institutions and organizations, should therefore, promote the employability of graduates through work integrated learning approaches based on TVET institutions—industry partnership.

Throughout the world, and particularly countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria included, renewed efforts are made to promote TVET for skill formation that would enhance productivity and sustainable global competitiveness (Dasmani, 2011). The increasing importance that African countries now attach to TVET is reflected in the various poverty reduction strategies that governments have developed in collaboration with World Bank (African Union, 2007). According to African Union (2007), the most important feature of TVET is its orientation towards the world of work and the emphasis of the curriculum on employability skills. TVET programs are well placed to train the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce for the economy. According to Ezeji, Ugwoke, Edeh and Okanazu (2015), TVET programs such as Business Education are aimed at empowering graduates with desired skills, knowledge and values for self-employment or paid employment. TVET is a change agent for social, economic, technological and national development (FME, 2009). TVET has become a subject for discussion at summits, academic conferences and at policy circles in Nigeria and other developing countries

(King & Palmer, 2008; Uwaifo & Uddi, 2009; Ojimba, 2012; Ladipo et al., 2013). The consensus among scholars and professionals is that TVET is apt for economic and technological advancement of developing nations of the world including Nigeria (World Bank, 2008; Desmart-Digbori, 2011; and Dangote, 2013).

Unfortunately, many research findings have revealed that TVET has been limited on employability and national development in Nigeria (Amadi, 2013). The author further stated that the effectiveness and national development of Nigeria have been hindered by myriad of factors such as funding, expertise, synergy with industry and the public perception of TVET. The synergy between TVET institutions and industry would greatly stimulate and enhance a partnership that will result to graduate employability and economic development of Nigeria. Partnership is an agreement between two or more persons, groups or organizations to put their resources, efforts and intelligence together to achieve a set goal. A TVET—Industry partnership through work integrated learning would greatly improve the work-readiness (employability) of graduates.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a program that incorporates more industry related activities with closer participation and partnerships with industry (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011). Work integrated learning programs enable graduates to learn and demonstrate greater work readiness. Cooper, Orrell and Bowden (2010) described work integrated learning as a planned course of learning activities that include industry placement concurrent with workshop activities. The programme is designed to support employability skills of graduates through activity discussion and reflection (Knight & Yorke, 2003). Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), teaching practice, internship, job shadowing, school-based enterprise, youth apprenticeship and cooperative work programme are forms of work integrated learning activities in Nigeria. Although such approaches have been in place in Nigeria, students and supervisors are not yet satisfied with the performance with regard to skills of graduates. Similarly, there is little research currently on how tertiary institutions in Nigeria effectively establish and implement such work integrated learning activities in their campuses. Work integrated learning challenges and has inspired students to acquire skills and earn credit for their degree by participating in any clinical or professional work placement, practicum, internship or project-based learning. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is increasingly utilized in higher education institutions in developed countries of Europe and America as part of their pedagogical approaches to knowledge and skill acquisition (Armstrong & Franklin, 2008; Gregory et al., 2010; Kirriemuin, 2010). Although, many work-based learning approaches and experiences with the derivable benefits are available for TVET institutions in Nigeria, the extent of their implementation and outcome remain doubtful based on the teeming number of unemployed graduates, including TVET graduates (Amadi, 2013).

The work readiness of graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has become a great concern to government, education providers and employers. Authorities of tertiary institutions are, therefore, under pressure to provide degree programs that are more closely aligned with employer and industry expectations. Several researches have presented a mismatch between the skill levels of higher education graduates and the expectation of employers. Such researches include Dearing Report (1997), the OECD Skills Strategy Report (2011) and Manpower Group Survey on Global Talent Shortages (2012). To address the issue, universities have to establish Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs that incorporate more industry related activities with closer participation and partnerships with industry (Freudenberg, Bimble, & Cameron, 2010; Freudenberg, Bimble, Cameron, & English, 2011; Patrick et al., 2008). Bridgestock (2009) also emphasized that to enhance graduate employability, higher education institutions need to incorporate career management skills and valid graduate employability attributes into their programs. Barrie (2012) further proposed that universities should develop qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social goods in an unknown future. The improvement of the employability of graduates should, therefore, be the focus of TVET institutions.

Employability implies the work readiness of graduates. Employability skills include communication, interpersonal, teamwork, problem solving, research and analytical, planning and organizing, technology and life-long learning skills. They are the generic skills every worker is expected to possess to work smoothly and comfortably with management and colleagues in organizations. Employers tend to value employability skills more highly than disciplinary-based understanding and skills (Yorke, 2006; Harvey, 2005). Employability skills are major recruitment concern of employers in both developing and developed nations of the world. The concern over lack of work readiness displayed by business graduates in particular has generated academic as well as industry-based research (Central Queens and University, 2009; Tindale, Evans, Cable, & Mead, 2005) into how tertiary accounting curricula can improve in relation to developing accounting graduates employability and professional work skills. Published research in other growth regions of the world also indicate mismatch between graduate skills and employers expectations. This is particularly in relation to problem solving, communication, teamwork, and management skills. Some of such researches include examples from New Zealand (Hodges &

Burdell, 2003); Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010); South Africa (Pop & Barkhuizen, 2010); Japan (Sugahara & Coman, 2010), China (Rose, 2013) and Malaysia (Chang, 2004; Davd, Abidin, Sapuan, & Rajadura, 2011). The implication, therefore, is that there should be urgent and greater collaboration, partnership and feedback between industry and educational institutions, particularly TVET institutions, to develop training systems that are more relevant to industry.

Similarly, the demand for fully-rounded work-ready graduates should be recognized by all the stakeholders, which include: government, industry, higher education and the wider community (Tran, 2012). This urgency to enhance the employability of graduates can effectively and efficiently be achieved through work integrated learning programs by TVET institutions in partnership with industry. The major purpose of this study is, therefore, to investigate the extent to which Nigerian universities, in partnership with industries, implement TVET work integrated learning programmes. Specifically, the study would ascertain the implementation, constraints and the strategies for enhancing the implementation of the TVET work integrated learning in Nigerian universities. This study is anchored on experiential learning theory. The theory implies that learning should involve Reflective Observation (RO), Concrete Experience (CE), Abstract Conceptualization (AC) and Active Experimentation (AE).

The experiential learning theory requires that an individual learner moves through a spiral of immediate experience, observation and the reflection of the experience (Kolb, 1984). The experiential learning theory is based on the assumption that people learn best when they are personally involved in the learning experience, and knowledge has to be discovered when the person is free to set his learning objectives, and is able to actively pursue them with a given framework (Smith, 1980). The experiential learning theory, therefore, tallies with the aim of work integrated learning which is to practice what was learnt in the school in the actual workplace.

2. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) To what extent are TVET-based work integrated programmes implemented by Nigeria universities in partnership with industry?
- 2) What are the constraints to effective implementation of TVET-based work integrated learning in Nigerian universities in partnership with industry?
- 3) What are the strategies for enhancing the implementation of TVET-based work integrated learning by Nigeria universities in partnership with industry?

3. Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design and was carried out in the public (state and federal) universities in South-East Nigeria that offer Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs. The universities are Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki; Enugu State University of Technology (ESUT), Enugu; Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The population for the study was made up 117 lecturers who teach TVET courses in those universities. A structured 45-item questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was face-validated by three experts. The questionnaire was structured on a five-point likert scale. The internal consistency of the items of the questionnaire was ascertained through Cronbach Alpha technique which yielded a coefficient of 0.83 considered high enough for the study. The data collected were analyzed using mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation. Research question one was answered using the real limit of the mean value, while research questions two and three were answered based on the cut-off point of 3.00. Any item with mean response of 3.00 and above was accepted while any item with mean below 3.00 was not accepted.

4. Results

4.1 Research Question One

To what extent are TVET-based work integrated learning implemented by Nigerian Universities in partnership with industries?

Table 1. Mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on the extent of implementation of work integrated learning by nigerian universities in partnership with industries

N=117				
S/NO	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Students are well oriented for WIL before placement	2.66	0.67	ME
2	Students are placed on work activities that are appropriate to them	2.34	0.58	LE
3	Students are mentored and supervised in the work place by employers	2.79	0.85	ME
4	The WIL programme is adequately and appropriately assessed	2.17	0.66	LE
5	Students are placed with employers who have the required facilities, staff and training programme	2.43	0.48	LE
6	Employers are given guidelines on how to evaluate students	1.96	0.75	LE
7	The objectives of the WIL programme are made available to students	2.28	0.92	LE
8	Adequate quality assurance of the programmed is provided	2.40	0.96	LE
9	Risk management and safety strategies in WIL programmes are adequately provided	2.54	0.71	ME
10	Effective communication exist between TVET institutions and employers/industries during the WIL programme	2.82	0.59	ME
11	Due diligence is exercised in the selection for work placement	2.24	0.77	LE
12	Appropriate agreements are signed by employers and TVET institutions	1.831	0.51	LE
13	Employers are informed of university requirements and expectations.	2.36	0.68	LE
14	Students and work place supervisors are informed of expected learning outcomes and assessment methods	2.57	0.81	ME
15	Adequate support services, materials and facilities are provided for students and employers	1.88	0.88	LE
16	Students progress and wellbeing are regularly monitored by the school and work place-based supervisors	1.74	0.55	LE
17	Student and TVET institutions follow employer standards, policies and procedures.	2.58	0.74	ME
18	Students submit employer-rated reports at the end of the WIL programme	3.46	0.48	ME
	Overall	2.39	0.70	LE

KEY: ME=Moderate Extent; LE=Low Extent; X=Mean; and SD=Standard Deviation.

The data presented in Table 1 indicated that seven items which their mean ranged from 2.54 to 3.46 are implemented to moderate extent while eleven items with their mean ranged from 1.74-2.43 were implemented to a low extent. The overall mean of 2.39 also indicated that all the items were implemented to low extent. This implies that all the respondents were in agreement that all the items in the table are implemented to low extent. The standard deviations of each of the items as well as the overall standard deviation ranged from 0.48 to 0.96, which implied that the opinions of all the respondents are closely together that work integrated learning is implemented to low extent by the universities in partnership with industries.

4.2 Research Question 2

What are the constraints to effective implementation of work integrated learning by Nigerian universities in partnership with industries?

Table 2. Mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on the constraints to effective implementation of work integrated learning by Nigerian universities in partnership with industries (N=117)

S/NO	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	The National Policy on Education placed little emphasis on Work Integrated Learning (WIL).	4.36	0.83	Agree
2	Industry and TVET lecturers are not well informed on how to implement WIL	4.51	0.64	“
3	TVET institutions are poorly funded to cope with the cost of engaging in WIL programme	4.82	0.57	“
4	Most TVET institutions lack requisite orientation on how to implement WIL programmes	3.94	0.79	“
5	Nonchalant attitude of wok site supervisors	4.75	0.61	“
6	Nonchalant attitude of school-based supervisors	4.18	0.89	”
7	Low level of awareness on the need for synergy between TVET institutions, business and industry	4.37	0.76	“
8	TVET Lecturers' poor access to relevant WILspaceprogramme windows.	3.96	0.64	“
9	Poor collaborative relationship between TVET institutions and employers	4.23	0.88	“
10	Lack of industries and business awareness on the benefits of WIL to the world of work	4.23	0.88	“
11	Many forms of work integrated learning are not yet included in the curriculum	3.84	0.72	“
12	Lack of professional development of teachers on WIL	4.8	0.56	“
13	Lack of enabling polices and government support for WIL	4.58	0.85	“
	Overall	4.39	0.73	Agree

KEY: ME=Moderate Extent; LE=Low Extent; X=Mean; and SD=Standard Deviation.

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that the respondents agree that all the items presented with the mean ranging from 3.84-4.82 are constraints to effective implementation of work integrated learning by Nigerian universities in partnership with industries. The standard deviation of each item and the overall standard deviation ranged from 0.56-0.89, which implies that all the respondents have similar opinions that all the items presented in the Table are constraints to effective implementation of WIL programme.

4.3 Research Question 3

What are the ways for enhancing the implementation of TVET-Based work integrated learning programs by Nigerian universities in partnership with industries?

Table 3. Mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on ways for enhancing the implementation of TVET-based work integrated learning by Nigerian universities in partnership with industries (N=117)

S/NO	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	National policy on education should incorporate WIL programs requirements of TVET institutions and industries	3.86	0.66	Agree
2	TVET curriculum should be updated to include WIL programs and how to implement them	4.24	0.91	“
3	TVET teachers should be encouraged and supported to undertake professional development programs on WIL	4.18	0.85	“
4	TVET institutions should get into effective partnerships with industries for the			

	implementation of WIL programs.	4.22	0.82	“
5	Professional development programs on WIL should be regularly organized for TVET teachers and employers	3.95	0.77	“
6	School and industry-based supervisors of WIL programs should be properly motivated for their services.	3.88	0.78	“
7	Special fund for the implementation of WIL programs should be adequately provided by government and other stakeholders.	4.38	0.86	“
8	School-based coordinators and supervisors should be equipped with skills to access WIL resources from e-library	4.46	0.88	“
9	Government, TVET institutions and other relevant authorities should redesign and operate environment friendly TVET partnership for WIL development	4.05	0.80	“
10	The administration of TVET should be handled by TVET specialists.	4.28	0.78	“
11	Employers should be well informed on the benefits of WIL to the world of work and the economy in general	4.07	0.66	“
12	Non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to sponsor students and teachers for WIL programs.	4.31	0.64	“
13	Adequate punishment should be meted on any school-based WIL supervisor or coordinator found wanting in the implementation of the programs	4.12	0.81	“
14	Adequate orientation should be given to students on what is expected of them from the WIL experience	4.09	0.76	“
	Overall	4.15	0.78	Agree

KEY: ME=Moderate Extent; LE=Low Extent; X=Mean; and SD=Standard Deviation.

The information in Table 3 shows that all the items have their mean ranging from 3.86-4.46 with the overall mean of 4.15. This implies that the respondents were in agreement that all the items are ways for enhancing the implementation of work integrated learning in Nigerian Universities. The low standard deviation on each item as well as the overall standard deviation which ranged from 0.64-0.91 also implies that all the items on the Table are ways for enhancing the implementation for WIL in the universities.

5. Discussion

The implementation of work integrated learning by universities in Nigeria as revealed by this study is low. For instance, risk management and safety measures for students as well as quality assurance for the WIL programs are not provided to a high extent. Again, it was revealed by the study that the employers and students are moderately acquainted with the objectives of WIL programmes before the placement of students. Out of the 18 indicators of effective implementation of WIL presented in this study, only seven of them are moderately implemented while eleven of them are lowly implemented with none of them highly implemented. This finding is in line with Amadi (2013) that only very few (mostly traditional ones) forms of work-based learning are implemented in Nigeria. The findings are also congruent with Pop and Barkhuizen (2010) that beyond UK and

Australia, work integrated learning is not effectively implemented in developing nations including Nigeria. The lack of employability skills in Nigeria graduates particularly TVET graduates could be as a result of poor implementation of work integrated learning, and lack of collaboration of TVET institutions with business and industries. To achieve the objectives of WIL, all TVET stakeholders, including educational institutions, industries and employers should become very interested in the programs.

Another outcome of this study is that the implementation of work integrated learning programs by Nigerian Universities in partnership with industries is constrained by many factors. Some of the constraints are poor funding and lack of awareness by TVET institutions on the need for synergy with industries, poor teacher quality in relation to WIL, lack of policies and enabling curriculum contents for the implementation of work integrated learning. The above findings are in support of Nguma (2003) that there are many indicators of failure in Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria without adequate attention yet. This is also in line with Okoye and Okwele (2014) that TVET programs including WIL programs suffer neglect and abysmal poor sponsorship in Nigeria. Furthermore, Okoye and Okwele (2013) noted that the image of TVET programs is very poor among Nigerians. The poor curriculum content and policies of TVET in Nigeria are some other problems of program implementation by TVET institutions. The identified challenges need to be proactively addressed by both government and the authorities of the TVET institutions.

This study also revealed many strategies that can enhance the implementation of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) by Nigerian universities. The strategies or measures that can lead to the enhancement include: incorporating work integrated learning in the national policy on education and the TVET curriculum; encouraging TVET teachers to undergo professional development training in WIL and creating special fund for the implementation of WIL programs in TVET institutions. The findings agrees with Raimi and Akhuemonkhan (2014) that for TVET to stimulate employability and promote national development, there is need for policy makers and other stakeholders to improve the level of funding, participation, expertise, policy implementation and curriculum harmonization in TVET programs including WIL. Other identified strategies for the enhancement of WIL programs in TVET are: improvement of synergy between industries and TVET institutions, adequate orientation of employers (industry) and TVET staff on the benefits of work integrated learning (WIL) and redesigning and operating environment friendly partnership that will attract NGOs, philanthropists and community to support the implementation of TVET programs such as work integrated learning. These findings are in agreement with UNESCO (2009) that industries and employers should be encouraged to get involved in the provision of TVET service delivery and teacher training through public-private partnership with government and TVET institutions. There should, therefore, be increased concern amongst government, TVET institutions and employers to enhance the work-readiness of TVET graduates. Greater collaboration, partnership and feedback between industries and TVET institutions would help the institutions to develop training systems that are more relevant to industry. Such systems can only be feasible through work-based or work integrated learning.

6. Conclusion

The implementation of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in Nigerian Universities, especially in universities in South-East Nigeria is very low. This is as a result of poor awareness of employers and, may be, the TVET institutions on the derivable benefits of WIL. Many problems militate against the effective implementation of WIL by TVET institutions in collaboration with business and industries. Some of the problems are: poor funding of TVET institutions and programs, poor quality of TVET teachers in relation to WIL, and lack of national policy and support for effective implementation of WIL by the TVET institutions. Greater effort by TVET stakeholders is, therefore, imperative to update the TVET curriculum with WIL programs and activities as well as to provide support for a more effective TVET-industry partnerships and collaborations.

7. Recommendations

- 1) Government should strive to infuse policies that are relevant for effective work integrated learning programs and expectations into the national policy on education.
- 2) The TVET curriculum should be reviewed and updated to include work integrated learning experiences and activities.
- 3) Government and authorities in TVET should encourage, support and sponsor TVET teachers for professional development through regular workshops, seminars and conferences.
- 4) Adequate funding of TVET and WIL programs should be provided by government and through community and other stakeholders support.

5) TVET institutions and government should increase the campaign for the awareness of the derivable benefits of WIL through solid partnership and collaborations between the TVET institutions, business and industries.

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