

*Full Length Research*

# The role of internship scheme on the acquisition of practical knowledge in University Libraries in South-South Zone of Nigeria

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Internship scheme played significant role on the acquisition of practical knowledge by students in Nigerian University libraries. The scheme and acquisition of practical knowledge referred to any channel, way or means of teaching practically what is been taught. It involved gaining practical knowledge or information, leading to a simple way of bridging the gap between theory and practical. The essence of the scheme and acquisition of practical knowledge was to ensure that students became more valuable and invariably learnt about their profession by getting a direct “on the job training” while in school. Structured questionnaire with four options scale of Strongly Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed was used for data collection. The study found out that internship scheme and acquisition of practical knowledge played a vital role in the academic life of students in our Universities. The study, therefore recommended that internship duration be extended to give students enough time for the learning.

**Keywords:** Internship, Acquisition, Practical, Knowledge, Information, Skill, Theory, University

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is identified as a tool for socio- economic development and technological advancement in any society. Indeed, education and library are two indivisible concepts fundamentally related to and co-existed with each other. Library education means educating the students to be qualified librarians or information scientists through organized instruction and training. It represents a synthesis of professional action and the future. A goal of library education is to familiarize students with the role of information scientists in the society and make them fully aware of sources of information resources. Therefore, one major way to achieve this goal effectively is for students in library and information science to engage in

internship or industrial work scheme and practical knowledge.

Learning itself has a vast meaning and is directly related to different ways of acquiring knowledge including both important phases of learning perfect combination of both practical and theoretical methods as necessary for holistic learning. It involves a process rather than a collection of realistic and technical knowledge which produces changes in an individual and the changes produced remain relatively permanent. Theoretical knowledge is the basis of doing anything practically and it explains the “why factors at the back of any situation and technique of working. Theory is noted to teach one through the experience of others. Theoretical learning is what knowledge is all about and practical learning has to

do with how the knowledge was learnt. The mode of practical learning along with theory give the students clear explanation of the facts.

Theoretical learning is good and useful but when that knowledge is not used practically it is of no use. Hence, it is very important to utilize the knowledge practically otherwise, there is no point gaining theoretical knowledge. So, to have perfect learning experience, one should gain both practical and theoretical knowledge. For the purpose of this article, internship scheme is defined as the first learning experience out of a traditional classroom or online setting. In the same vein, the internship guide book prepared by Magd and Al-Ghazo, (2009) defines the concept as “an active learning experience in which students learn by taking on a responsible role as a worker in an organization.” The modern concept of internship essentially springs from the medieval “apprenticeship.” The difference is that internship is more exploratory and students are not bound to work for employers after the internship is over (though many students do receive job offers.) Another term used for referring to this period students spend at a company for gaining work experience as part of their undergraduate course is “placement.” Even though generally speaking both terms (internship and placement) have the same meaning, the difference springs basically from the type of industry the experience takes place, the duration and timing. Thus, internship usually lasts from a week to ten or twelve weeks.

In order to bridge the gap between theory and practical in the classroom with industrial skills, the Students Industrial Work Experience (SIWES) was established. Mafe (2010) stated that the scheme is a planned and supervised intervention programme based on stated and specific learning and career objectives and geared towards developing the occupational competences of the participants. It is a programme required to be undertaken by all students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria pursuing courses in specialized areas such as engineering, technical and business education, home economics, applied sciences and applied arts. The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme was established in 1974 by Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to provide industrial experience among others. The principle underlying this work experience scheme for students is the desire to relate practical with theoretical learning which characterized conventional classroom situation with a view to striking a balance between them (Duigna 2002) in Okoh (2010).

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The internship scheme came into existence following the decree No. 47 of October, 1971 as amended in 1990. This decree gave birth to the establishment of Industrial Training Fund in 1974. However, the objectives as stated by Alolabi (2009) include:

- a. To provide students with opportunity to apply their knowledge in real work situation, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice.
- b. To expose students to methods and techniques in handling equipment and machineries that may not be available in their institutions.
- c. To provide avenue for students to acquire industrial skill and experience in their course of study.
- d. To make the transition from school to the world of work easier and enhance students contacts for later job placement.
- e. To prepare the students for a business for career by merging their analytical power with self-reliance thereby help them develop entrepreneurship skills.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

It is observed with dismay that in most institutions of higher learning so much time is spent on theories at the expense of teaching skills. This is as a result of lack of teaching materials and facilities needed to help students develop the necessary skills needed (Okoh 2001). Though industrial training or industrial attachment as the case may be, may provide students with work experience and prepares them for the work place, internship scheme is not without hiccups as students face the challenges of finding the firm or companies that would not just absorb them in their core areas of competence, but also pay them some allowances. According to Mafe (2010), the major benefits accruing to students who conscientiously participate in internship training are the skills and competencies they acquired. These skills remain internalized as lifelong assets for them. However, it appears that some of the students cannot demonstrate the skills acquired through the training. This is contrary to what is expected of them after the programme.

Organizations such as banks request for IT students because of cheap labour, others do not wish to accommodate students who beg for placement while some organizations will demand the students to pay for the knowledge acquired. Another problem of this study is the duration required for the programme. In some cases, the training takes only two or three months and this is too short for them to learn about a particular venture or field, especially when adequate attention is not given to the learners.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study includes:

1. To determine the internship scheme and acquisition of practical knowledge.

2. To determine how to handle the challenges the students may encounter in their work place through the position of internship and practical knowledge in librarianship.
3. To ascertain the position of internship and practical knowledge in librarianship.
4. To determine how beneficial internship exposure is to practical skill development of students.
5. To examine the extent the scheme has so far helped students in understanding concepts used in their course of study.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do the students understand the essence of internship?
2. Do the students know the position of internship scheme and practical knowledge acquisition in librarianship?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Research studies have been conducted on the role of internship scheme or Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) on the acquisition of practical knowledge. According to Burnett (2003), internship programme contributes significantly and positively towards enhancing the knowledge base and motivational level of students in their various fields of study. Studies have reported the immense benefits of the program in conventional colleges and universities on the rationale of offering attachment as part of the academic program. Further benefits include improvement in career-related direction, gaining practical experience (Lubbers, 2001); improved marketability of graduates (Swift and Kent, 1999; Hyman-Porker, 1998); Interpersonal skills (Beard and Morton, 1999) and understanding of the theories of classroom learning (Cook et al, 2004).

In order to make internship very effective and more essential, Internetweb.com (2011), the following key elements must be considered, viz, long-range planning, workload, availability of intern projects, staff support, office space, financial resources etc. should be thought of in advance. In addition, the scheme must be in an area closely related to the students' major career, goals and to avenues that are exploring in order to add educational value (internship.com n.d.; Magd & Al-Ghazo, 2009).

On the companies which include those practical skills required in vocational or any other field of study, self-employment or knowledge needed in retail and provision of services (Olaosebikan, 2011) Egbri and Chukwunedo, (2013) on their part explained that technical vocational education and training is meant to prepare the learners with the right skills and values needed to be self-employed or be employable in the world of work. However, they added that there is existing gap between

what is obtain in the classroom and what is needed in the world of work. In order to bridge this gap between theory and practical in the classroom with individual skills the student industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) was established.

The collaboration between formal education and industrial sector, according to Onyesom and Onagite (2013) help to create enabling environment for students to acquire hands on experience, knowledge, skills and appropriate altitude to work. To further explain the need for this, Mafe (2010) noted that both education and training are indispensable to the productive world of work and functioning of the society. He explained that theoretical knowledge alone would not usually prepare an educated person for the world of work.

Okoye and Chris-Abey (2015). Noted that altitude of students or the understanding of what is taught or observed has to do with our disposition to issues or ideas. From observation students believe that exposure to SIWES is very beneficial to them, because it enhances skill development and academic performance.

However, students encounter many challenges during internship scheme program. Ubale (2014) identified some of the problems to include duration for training, which is inadequate for acquisition of meaningful skill; students reporting later at their places of assignment due to inability to secure the right places of attachment as well as rejection by some organizations. Furthermore, students arrange for their own accommodation, which must be convenient for them. This poses a problem to them because of financial implication. As a result, they find themselves in place other than what they wanted. Lastly, some of the industry-based supervisors may be hostile to the students and may not be ready to help them to learn. In the same vein, previous research studies also showed that internship periods were too short and majority of students think that the most appropriate duration should be six months (Oliver, 2010; Michan, 2006), Mihail (2006). Another challenge facing the scheme is irregularity in academic calendar of institutions. The issue of strike and students' unrest leading to closure of institutions has a serious negative effect on the duration of training. Considering all these challenges, it may be necessary to ask whether the scheme is actually meeting up with the task of helping the students to learn.

## INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

Structural questionnaire was used to elicit and obtain information from library and information science students in the university libraries in South-South political zone of Nigeria. The instrument is made up of items with four options of strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and strongly Disagree.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Essence of internship and practical knowledge acquisition

**Table 1**

S/NO.	Item	Mean	Remark
		X	
1.	The best outside learning is through internship	2.83	Agreed
2.	Internship bridges the gap between theory and practical	3.0	Agreed
3.	Internship exposes the students to the world of work	3.08	Agreed
4.	Internship increases the knowledge base of students	3.66	Agreed
5.	Internship guarantees the students for employment	1.83	Disagreed

The data presented in table 1 showed that the students appreciated and acknowledged the essence of internship and practical knowledge acquisition. By the mean score of 2.83, they agreed that the best outside learning is through internship. The mean score on items 2, 3 and 4 with 3.0, 3.08 and 3.66 respectively, indicate that internship scheme bridges the gap between theory and practical, exposes students to the world of work as well as increases the knowledge base of the students. The score on item number five (1.83) 'disagreed' showed that students may not be guaranteed employment after their course of study. However, the result shows that the scheme is very relevant to the students' skill acquisition.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS 2

The position of internship and practical knowledge in librarianship.

**Table 2**

S/NO.	Item	Mean	Remark
		X	
1.	Internship and practical knowledge acquisition play an important role in librarianship.	3.66	Agreed
2.	Internship prepares library and information science students for work method and techniques in librarianship.	3.41	Agreed
3.	Internship provides avenue for library and information science students to acquire skills and experience in librarianship.	3.75	Agreed
4.	Internship exposure cannot influence learning skills in librarianship.	1.87	Disagreed
5.	Internship and practical knowledge acquisition are geared towards creating learning opportunities in librarianship	3.5	Agreed

Results in table 2 reveal that majority of the respondents (3.75) strongly agreed that internship and practical knowledge provide avenue for library and information science students to acquire skills and experience in librarianship; (3.66) mean score agreed that internship plays an important role in librarianship; (3.41) score agreed that the scheme prepares library and information science students for work method and techniques in librarianship; (3.5) score agreed that internship scheme requisition is geared towards creating learning opportunities in librarianship; however, (1.87) score disagreed that internship scheme cannot influence the

learning skills in librarianship. Therefore, all the results in table 2 strongly agreed and emphasized the importance of internship and practical knowledge acquisition in librarianship except item number 4.

### DISCUSSION

From the analysis of data all the students agreed that internship and practical knowledge acquisition is very relevant since it helps to develop interest in practical activities in their fields of study. They also agreed that experiences obtained from internship programme expose

them to acquiring marketable skills by giving them opportunities to handle materials and equipment in their place of internship scheme. The findings also show that internship and practical knowledge acquisition plays vital role in librarianship because without the scheme library and information science students would become half-baked graduates. It prepares the students for work method and techniques in librarianship as well as provides an avenue for library and information science students to acquire skills and experience needed in librarianship, which cannot be acquired in the classroom settings alone.

The result showed that the students agreed that the experience they obtained from the scheme helped them to make abstract concepts used in the classroom concrete. This implies that exposure to the scheme makes for better understanding in the classroom situation. This agrees with the findings of Okoro (1996) who stated that SIWES aimed at improving the quality of vocational education by providing occupational experiences to complement the theoretical and practical experiences received in the school. Okoh (2010) also stated that SIWES is aimed at bridging the gap between school and the world of work.

## CONCLUSION

The study attempted to examine internship scheme and acquisition of practical knowledge by students in university libraries in South-South political zone of Nigeria. It has been affirmed that internship and acquisition of practical knowledge creates the best outside classroom learning opportunities. The study has shown that the importance of internship scheme and acquisition of knowledge cannot be over emphasized. This implies that from the findings of the study, students cannot entirely learn without internship or industrial attachment as the case may be or acquisition of practical knowledge. The result of findings indicates that internship scheme is very important in librarianship or any other chosen career because the skills and experience so gained remains lifelong asset for the beneficiaries and make them more valuable and efficient in their fields of study.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Internship scheme duration should be extended to a period of one year as it makes room for better learning.
2. The student should be strictly supervised during internship.
3. Government should enact laws that will make it compulsory for all involved in internship scheme to allow their students have a feel of all departments in their establishment so as to enhance their experience.
4. A strict compliance measure should be introduced to hinder the use of students as cheap labour in their internship centre.
5. All the establishments organizing internship programmes should be made to pay some allowances to the students; this will go a long way to boosting the moral of the student and sustain their interest in the training programme.

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