

Industrial Attachment challenges: Lessons drawn from Gweru Polytechnic College in Zimbabwe.

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Abstract: The study sought to establish challenges attachees face during industrial attachment. The examination of this topic was prompted by criticism of polytechnic graduates by employers for being improperly trained. The students on the other hand, lay the blame on industrial training environment. Solutions to the problems shall be used to improve industrial training so as to achieve human capital development. The researcher used open ended questionnaires, focus groups and interviews as data collection methods. Purposive sampling was used to select participants of the study in line with quantitative and qualitative research approaches used in data analysis. The participants were lecturers, students and workplace supervisors in Gweru city. The results of the study were thematically analysed. It emerged from the empirical findings of the study that shortage of attachment places, financial problems, inadequate training, inappropriate area-deployment and issues of student sexual harassment were challenges noted. This study recommended that adequate resources be mobilised towards student attachment and the colleges to have project establishments to help in relieving attachment places. There is also need to develop partnership with industry to easy placement of students, and to deploy attachees under supervision of qualified and experienced mentors. Furthermore, there is need for support from the government, private sector and other stakeholders.

Keywords: On the job training, Hands on experience, Industrial attachment, Technical Vocational Education.

I. BACKGROUND

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has remained one and the most important strategy that when harnessed prepare youths for workplace employment. Polytechnics bear the responsibility to impart technical skills to the youths. Maclean and Wilson (2009)'s empirical studies noted the important role technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs do. (TVET) institutions play an important role in helping youths in the acquisition of job skills and knowledge, enabling them to secure paid employment or make self-employment for a sustainable livelihood. In preparation for attachment students spend two years at college and one year on the job training. On the job training is then intended to complement what the attaché has learnt at college with what the job demands. In his research (Sekenu, 2004) postulates that the only way to empower the youth is to provide them with adequate and qualitative education in order to make them job creators and eradicate poverty. The only way to empower the youths is through TVET as observed by European Commission (2004).

There are multiple of complains raised by students who undergo industrial attachment. Some complained that many employers who take students do not give adequate on the job training. Further issues emerged are that some employers take students to enjoy cheap labour at the expense of the training they need. Shortage of attachment places has exacerbated the attachment obstacles to students. Most of these descriptions have prompted this research to evaluate challenges that affect students during industrial attachment. Industrial attachment is compulsory so that students can gain skills needed in the industry and there is no way in which a student can escape these challenges besides addressing the concerns. Contemporary debate focuses on employability skills, which expresses a view that graduates must come to workplaces ready to hit the ground running (Sheldon & Thornthwaite, 2005) in order to better face increased competition in the graduate employment market (Orrell, 2004).

1.1 Review of Related Literature

The new world economy requires innovation, training, reinventing in vocational education and entrepreneurship training that will significantly favour the youth. The African Union (AU) (2007) document on TVET states that that TEVT is important for national development for it promotes skills acquisition through competency based training. Technical and vocational education empowers the learner with skills, knowledge and attitude which increase prospect of future employment. This is made more effective through on the job training. Industrial attachment is here refers to an on- the job training in which a student learns while working within a normal working environment, using the actual tools and actually doing the job, (Leong, 2004). Arikewuyo (1999) endorses that effective industrial attachment is an indispensable component of developing students' competences in their areas of specialization. He further states that this process can only achieve desired results if