
“WE DON’T HAVE TIME TO LEARN NEW THINGS”: UNIVERSITY SANDWICH-UNDERGRADUATES’ PECULIARITIES AND CHALLENGES IN STUDENTS’ INDUSTRIAL WORK EXPERIENCE SCHEME (SIWES) PROGRAMME

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Abstract

Sandwich undergraduates, like other part-time students, navigate through a condensed academic schedule and encounter multifaceted hurdles that influence their approach, commitment, and outcomes within this pivotal experiential learning endeavour. This study highlights the peculiarities and challenges faced by these students in completing the Students’ Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme, which is designed to bridge the gap between academia and industry during their formative years. The study adopted a case study survey design. The area of the study is the Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument used for data collection was one-on-one semi-structured interviews and a survey questionnaire. The instrument was face-validated by three experts, and the reliability of the instrument was established using 22 400-level sandwich undergraduates, who were not part of the respondents. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency, and an overall reliability coefficient of .857 was obtained. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and a t-test. Drawing on the survey questionnaire and interview results, the awareness of sandwich undergraduates regarding the objectives of the SIWES programme indicates a disconnect from expectations, owing to a poor orientation campaign, lack of proper remuneration, and the unrelatedness of workplace activities and SIWES placement duties, among other factors. Also, the students lament not having the time to learn new things. Thus, to ensure the SIWES programme aligns with its intended objectives, recommendations include the pressing necessity for tailored approaches that reorient the focus of the sandwich students towards actively engaging with the programme's opportunities for skill enhancement and practical learning, beyond the fulfilment of graduation prerequisites.

Keywords: Higher Education, Part-Time, Sandwich Undergraduates, SIWES, University

Introduction

Despite the increasing emphasis on practical skill acquisition in higher education, there remains a limited understanding of how part-time university students, particularly those enrolled in sandwich programmes, experience the Students’ Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Nigeria. While the SIWES initiative was designed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and industry practice, most existing studies (e.g., Anyaeneh & Ochuba, 2019) have focused on full-time students, leaving a gap in knowledge about how part-time students navigate and benefit from this crucial component of their training. This neglect

is concerning, given the distinctive circumstances of part-time students, who often balance employment, family responsibilities, and academic obligations within limited timeframes. Consequently, their participation, performance, and overall outcomes in SIWES may differ substantially from those of full-time students, yet these differences remain underexplored in Nigerian higher education research.

The continual demand for highly skilled human resources capable of driving knowledge-based economies has fueled the massification of higher education worldwide. Higher education encompasses structured tertiary educational institutions such as polytechnics, colleges of education, and universities, each with specific academic and professional mandates (Alemu, n.d.). Among these, universities serve as hubs for advanced intellectual development and research, cultivating expertise across the arts, sciences, and professional disciplines (Assié-Lumumba, 2005). Within universities, students may enroll through various modes, most commonly full-time or part-time, depending on personal and professional circumstances (Swain & Hammond, 2011).

Part-time study, which allows learners to combine education with employment or other commitments, has expanded globally as a flexible route for workforce development. For example, as of 2020, about 40% of the UK workforce had attained higher qualifications through part-time programmes (Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE], 2007), while in the United States, part-time enrolments represented 38% of students in degree-granting institutions (Chen & Carroll, 2007). Similar trends are observed in Nigeria, where universities offer part-time (or sandwich) programmes to accommodate working adults seeking professional advancement.

However, research consistently shows that part-time students face unique challenges compared to their full-time counterparts. These include greater age diversity, competing work and family responsibilities, and limited study time (Swain & Hammond, 2011; MacCann et al., 2012). Studies further highlight financial pressures, inadequate institutional support, and constrained access to learning resources as additional barriers (Gil, 2014; Hordósy et al., 2018; Stratton et al., 2004). These factors often translate into lower academic performance, extended programme duration, or attrition (MacCann et al., 2012). Despite these realities, part-time students in Nigeria are still required to complete the same course content and experiential components, including SIWES, as full-time students.

The SIWES programme, initiated by Nigeria's Industrial Training Fund in 1973, was designed to expose students to industrial practices and prepare them for employment after

graduation. Its objectives include promoting practical skill acquisition, industry exposure, and smoother transitions from academia to the workplace. While earlier research has reported both successes and shortcomings of SIWES implementation among full-time students (Ejiofor & Orji, 2015; Anyaeneh & Ochuba, 2019), the experiences of sandwich or part-time undergraduates remain largely undocumented. Given their unique enrollment patterns and time constraints, it is crucial to examine how effectively SIWES supports this group and what specific challenges or adaptations are necessary. Addressing this gap will provide valuable insights for improving programme design, institutional support, and the overall relevance of SIWES to Nigeria's evolving higher education landscape.

For this study, the focus is on part-time students whose educational programmes are patterned to run during the weekends, and mostly full-time during long vacations. This sort of university part-time arrangement is called the sandwich programme, a term that is peculiar to Nigerian universities. Kankam (2020) characterized the sandwich programme as an educational initiative conducted during extended breaks when regular or full-time students are not attending classes. This form of programme, also referred to as long-vacation programmes or alternatively known as evening or weekend programmes by some (Adesoye & Amusa, 2011), is structured to operate within these time frames in certain institutions. Additionally, like Swain & Hammond (2011) observed, part-time programmes cover certificate, undergraduate, and postgraduate programmes, Nigerian universities also offer sandwich programmes both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Hence, the population of interest is further delineated to be 'Sandwich Undergraduates' – those enrolled for a first-degree programme.

Sandwich undergraduates refer to learners, pre-service teachers, and those upgrading their certifications to degree level, who are admitted for a degree-awarding programme that runs part-time, and during long vacations (July to September for a year). Long vacation here denotes the period in which the primary and secondary schools go on vacation, expecting to begin a fresh academic year upon resumption. As such, teachers and workers in schools and establishments, both private and government-owned, engage in activities expected to improve their output and reputations in their workplaces. Sandwich undergraduates simply underscores the level of the degree expected of the students upon graduation. Thus, sandwich undergraduates upon graduation receive the same certificates given to the full-time/regular counterpart, hence, the consistency in programme requirements. However, although a 4-year

degree course for full-time students is usually 5 years for the sandwich undergraduates, the pursuit for higher education is undeterred by the duration.

The pursuit of higher education, particularly within the realm of part-time or sandwich undergraduate programmes, presents a unique landscape where academic pursuits intersect with practical experiences, job roles, and personal family responsibilities. Amidst this academic journey, one crucial facet stands as a pivotal bridge between theoretical learning and real-world application - the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). SIWES is a skill development programme which was designed to expose and prepare higher education students for the industrial work situation by enforcing placement positions in industries, factories and any relevant commercial establishment for the acquisition of technical and vocational skills (Anyaneh & Ochuba, 2019). However, within this framework lies this distinct subset of individuals: University Sandwich-Undergraduates. Their engagement and experiences within the SIWES programme unfold against a backdrop of peculiarities and challenges that diverge from conventional academic trajectories.

While examining the challenges within the SIWES programme, some distinct characteristics stand out regarding the sandwich students. Firstly, a significant portion of these sandwich undergraduates are concurrently employed in various capacities. Secondly, despite the programme's expectation for them to cover the same curriculum as full-time students, their timeframe for a one-year programme is condensed to approximately three months, after which they resume their respective jobs until the following extended break. Thirdly, some sandwich undergraduates work in industries unrelated to their course of study. Additionally, due to the nature of the sandwich programme, there's a lack of provision for these students to defend or showcase the outcomes of their industrial exposure, often resulting in the perception that the SIWES programme for the sandwich students revolves primarily around fulfilling logbook requirements without substantial evaluation. Given these distinct characteristics specific to the sandwich students, particularly within the context of the SIWES programme, this study aims to assess the alignment between the SIWES objectives and the actual outcomes experienced by sandwich undergraduates.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. Are the sandwich undergraduate students aware of the objectives of the SIWES programme?

2. What are the challenges of sandwich undergraduate students in participating in the SIWES programme?
3. What is the outcome of the SIWES programme among sandwich undergraduate students?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive case study design. According to Priya (2021), case study research design is a strategy that involves a detailed study of a concerned population within a natural setting. A case study approach allows researchers to use different data collection methods as would be needed to answer the research questions. As such, this study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, using one-on-one semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires, respectively. The study was carried out in the Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The interview questions explored participants' perceptions of the objectives of SIWES in the context of the sandwich programme and the particular challenges encountered in the quest to accomplish the requirement for graduation. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee. The recording is intended to facilitate transcribing using coding schemes derived from line-by-line analysis. Additionally, this approach aimed to enhance comprehension of the connections between participants' replies. Each interview had a duration ranging from 25 to 40 minutes. By discerning both similar and dissimilar responses, these were then organized into thematic categories. The interview offers insight into the sandwich students' awareness of the SIWES programme and the challenges encountered (see Mulkeen et al., 2019).

Furthermore, a structured questionnaire, developed by the researchers, was used to ascertain information from the majority of the participants who were not disposed to grant interviews. The questionnaire consists of two parts, Part I & II. Part I elicits demographic information while Part II comprises three clusters with 17 items. Cluster 1 has four items which elicited responses on the student's level of awareness of the main objectives of the SIWES programme. Awareness was measured using a five-point response option ranging from *Not at all aware 1 to Very much aware = 5*. Cluster 2 has seven items that sought responses on the challenges of SIWES placement among the sandwich undergraduates. Lastly, Cluster 3 comprised 6 items that elicited responses on the outcome of the SIWES programme in the experience of the sandwich undergraduates, who responded to by only final year sandwich

students. Clusters 2 and 3 were measured using five-point response options ranging from *Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 5*.

Before administering the instrument, it was face-validated by three experts in the Department of Industrial Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Also, the reliability of the instrument was established using 22 400-level sandwich undergraduates, who were not part of the respondents. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency, and an overall reliability coefficient of .857 was obtained. Data collection with the questionnaire was through direct contact with respondents. A total of 53 responses were gathered, and analysis was done using descriptive statistics and a t-test for comparison.

Participants: VTE Sandwich Undergraduates

The 53 participants in this study comprised 32 final year (500 Level) and 21 penultimate year (400 Level) sandwich undergraduates in the Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, is home to various areas of skill training and certifications, as well as full-time and part-time programmes of vocational teacher education. This area is suitable for this case study as it has quite a number of students enrolled in the sandwich undergraduate programme from year to year, in the six Departments of the Faculty (see Chukwu et al., 2020). These Sandwich students are expected to partake in the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme, as part of the requirements for their graduation; hence, studying this population is expected to shed light on the outcome of the SIWES programme when compared with the stipulated objectives and highlight the peculiar challenges of this unique population.

Results

The following results emerged from the analysis of the questionnaire responses:

Table 1: Awareness of SIWES Objectives among Sandwich Undergraduates

| S/N | Awareness of the Objectives of SIWES | All Participants | | 500-level Students | | 400-level Students | | <i>t-cal</i> | <i>p-value</i> | Remark |
|-----|--------------------------------------|------------------|---|--------------------|------|--------------------|------|--------------|----------------|--------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | | |
| | | 1 | Provides avenue for Students to acquire industrial skills and | 1.09 | 0.30 | 1.16 | 0.37 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|----|
| | experience in their course of study. | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Prepares Students for the industrial work situation they are to meet after graduation. | 1.23 | 0.42 | 1.09 | 0.30 | 1.43 | 0.51 | -3.04 | 0.00 | S |
| 3 | Exposes Students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in their Institutions. | 1.06 | 0.23 | 1.06 | 0.25 | 1.05 | 0.22 | 0.23 | 0.82 | NS |
| 4 | Makes the transition from school to the world of work easier, and enhance Students contacts for later job placement. | 1.15 | 0.36 | 1.09 | 0.30 | 1.24 | 0.44 | -1.44 | 0.16 | NS |

Table 1 shows the sandwich undergraduates' level of awareness of the main objectives of SIWES. The mean scores recorded were far below the 3.5 benchmark in all the categories, indicating that the respondents are "Not at all aware" of the objectives expected of them to pursue while assigned to embark on the SIWES programme. The Table also shows the *t-cal* and *p-values* comparing students who are yet to undergo the SIWES programme (400 level) and those who have passed through the programme (500 level). It shows that the responses were not significantly different, but for item 2 – "prepares students for the industrial work situation they are to meet after graduation" with *t-cal* and *p-value* of -3.04 and 0.00, respectively. Therefore, both 400L and 500L sandwich undergraduates do not differ in their responses with respect to their level of awareness of SIWES objectives.

Table 2 shows the challenges of SIWES placement among sandwich undergraduates. Data in Table 2 shows there was consensus on the challenges of the SIWES programme among the respondents. All the items have mean scores above 4.0, implying that the challenges were strongly agreed upon as hindrances to the progress and attainment of SIWES objectives. Moreover, the *t-cal* and *p-value* show parallel acceptance of the challenges of SIWES, thus, there is no significant difference in the mean values of the responses of the sandwich undergraduates on the challenges of SIWES placement.

Table 2: Challenges of SIWES Placement among Sandwich Undergraduates

| S/N | Challenges of SIWES among Sandwich Undergraduates | All Participants | | 500-level Students | | 400-level Students | | <i>t-cal</i> | <i>p-value</i> | Remark |
|-----|---|------------------|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|------|--------------|----------------|--------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | | |
| 5 | Authorities' poor attention towards VTE sandwich students' SIWES programme | 4.40 | 0.84 | 4.41 | 0.80 | 4.38 | 0.92 | 0.11 | 0.92 | NS |
| 6 | Lack of morale to engage in SIWES programme on the part of the sandwich students | 4.26 | 0.68 | 4.16 | 0.68 | 4.43 | 0.68 | -1.43 | 0.16 | NS |
| 7 | Workloads or demands from family, career, and studies | 4.32 | 0.75 | 4.25 | 0.72 | 4.43 | 0.81 | -0.84 | 0.40 | NS |
| 8 | Time constraints due to other engagements | 4.21 | 0.66 | 4.16 | 0.68 | 4.29 | 0.64 | -0.69 | 0.49 | NS |
| 9 | Low funds to cater for other needs, thereby freeing up more time to engage in SIWES | 4.30 | 0.77 | 4.22 | 0.79 | 4.43 | 0.75 | -0.96 | 0.34 | NS |
| 10 | Dissimilarity or unrelatedness of workplace, and SIWES placement duties | 4.38 | 0.66 | 4.31 | 0.64 | 4.48 | 0.68 | -0.89 | 0.38 | NS |
| 11 | Lack of remunerations from SIWES placement | 4.36 | 0.83 | 4.28 | 0.81 | 4.48 | 0.87 | -0.83 | 0.41 | NS |

Table 3: SIWES Outcome among Final Year Sandwich Undergraduates

| S/N | SIWES Outcome among Sandwich Undergraduates | Mean | SD | Remark |
|-----|---|------|------|-----------|
| 12 | Acquired employable industrial skills and experiences | 2.92 | 0.98 | Disagreed |
| 13 | Ready to meet up with work demands in area of study. | 2.96 | 0.92 | Disagreed |
| 14 | Experienced handling equipment and machinery that are not available in school but vital in production line. | 3.00 | 0.94 | Disagreed |
| 15 | Assured of a workplace after graduation. | 2.91 | 0.93 | Disagreed |
| 16 | Learnt new skills, but not in line with course of study | 3.13 | 0.98 | Disagreed |
| 17 | Fulfilled a compulsory requirement for graduation | 4.06 | 0.82 | Agreed |

Data in Table 3 shows the responses of the final year sandwich undergraduates on the outcome of the SIWES programme. Based on the mean benchmark of 3.50 for a 5-point response option, only item 17 has a mean score above the benchmark. It means that although the respondents disagreed to have “acquired employable industrial skills and experiences” and other possible outcomes, everyone agreed to have “fulfilled a compulsory requirement for graduation” as an outcome of the SIWES programme.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, findings based on the interviews were infused in the discussion of the results presented above, using the main research questions as subheadings:

How aware are you of the objectives of the SIWES programme?

The study revealed that sandwich undergraduates are unaware of the objectives/expectations of the SIWES programme. Awareness is usually judged by knowledge and dispositions. The disposition of some of those interviewed established that the knowledge of what is expected of the students was far from complete. For example, a certain class representative said:

“We were taught about the SIWES before now. I think the objectives were mentioned then. But, the most important thing about this IT is to complete the logbook, get the grade for the programme and graduate. No time!”

(Note: IT means Industrial Training, students’ way of representing SIWES)

Another man who was working in his personal workshop during the supposed SIWES period said:

“I have nothing more to learn from the companies. I will use my daily output to fill the logbook and submit when school resumes” (A woodworker who uses his shop as his SIWES placement).

As much as it is important to have the SIWES logbook filled and submitted as proof of compliance and participation, the main objectives of the programme are not to fill logbooks. Also, although some of the sandwich undergraduates have one job or the other, mostly not in line with the area of their study, a SIWES enrollee is expected to seek a placement in an industry relevant to their field of study, to learn with machines and equipment that are not in his/her workplace or school.

When reminded of the importance of securing a SIWES placement in a relevant company, with modern equipment and machines, a lady said:

“Instead of going to insult myself among younger workers, I prefer to sit in my office, and find my way around filling the workbook” (Office worker who did not attempt getting a SIWES placement).

From the interactions and data in Table 1, two deductions were made: poor awareness and negligence of importance. This is in line with the findings of Idiegbeyan-ose et al. (2016) and Reinhardt et al. (2012).

According to Reinhardt et al. (2012), “awareness refers to the cognitive ability of a person to recognize, interpret and judge a given phenomenon.” It further refers to the knowledge of an event, methodology, and expectations with which one discerns and judges a given concept or experience (Idiegbeyan-ose et al., 2016). Sandwich undergraduates lack a clear knowledge of the objectives of SIWES, and as such are unable to interpret and judge the expectations towards realizing any goal of the programme. However, the students' display of lack of knowledge, unclear methodology, zero expectations, and total negligence of importance can be blamed on certain factors. One of such factors is a poor orientation towards the SIWES programme.

Poor orientation towards the SIWES programme, according to Aliyu et al. (2022), is still a challenge in the programme. Ejiofor and Orji (2015) underscored that poor orientation is at the root of the inability of the students to meet with set objectives of SIWES. Thus, the orientation of sandwich students remains questionable in the face of the uninformed and unguarded dispositions towards the SIWES programme.

What are the challenges of the SIWES placement amongst you, Sandwich undergraduates?

The unanimous agreement on the challenges of SIWES peculiar to sandwich undergraduates, as shown in Table 2, is not different from the responses of the interviewees. Every interviewee seems to have a unique way of elaborating on the challenges. Here are some examples:

“My own problem is time. Once the period of my stay in school passes, I must return to work and face family responsibilities” (A male student from Kaduna state).

“I don't even know why SIWES should be part of our programme, when they know that most of us are working somewhere. What time do I have to go to another establishment or learn something new? The truth is that most of us are doing it because it is compulsory” (A male student from Nassarawa).

“The best place for me to do my SIWES is in Nsukka, because no supervisor will come to Abuja to see what I am doing. But the school timetable cannot permit

that. Once I return to my base, I am on my own till next year, I will come and submit what (the logbook) I have filled” (A female student from Abuja).

“I can dedicate time to learn new things during IT, but who will take care of my family? I heard the payment for IT is N15,000 (Fifteen Thousand Naira), and it is once. That money cannot cover anything sir” (A student, resident in Nsukka, but is engaged in personal business).

“Most of us have families and are no longer young for this kind of exposure. Exposure to learning new things is not for someone of my age. We are in school for the certificate to upgrade our earnings – SIWES is not even paying” (A student from Enugu City).

The narratives of the challenges vary, but the echo seems aligned. The alignment is the strong agreement of the respondents, through the results in Table 2 and responses during the interviews. Thus, the challenges of SIWES placement among the sandwich undergraduates include authorities’ poor attention towards students’ SIWES programme; lack of morale to engage in the SIWES programme on the part of the sandwich students; workloads or demands from family, career, and studies; time constraints due to other engagements; low funds to cater for other needs; dissimilarity or unrelatedness of workplace, and SIWES placement duties; and lack of remunerations from SIWES placement. This finding is in line with a great volume of research on this topic (Ogbuanya et al., 2018; Ejiofor & Orji, 2015).

The challenges of SIWES must be tackled if the dividends of the programme are to be realized. Thus, Ejiofor & Orji (2015) stated that SIWES challenges relating to administration and implementation cannot completely be avoided, but can be managed and handled effectively for the delivery of functional and qualified workers needed in industries. Administrative challenges such as authorities’ poor attention towards the sandwich students’ SIWES programme, and lack of remuneration, are bottlenecks hindering the actualization of SIWES objectives. On the other hand, implementation challenges involve a lack of morale to engage in the SIWES programme on the part of the sandwich students, dissimilarity or unrelatedness of workplace and SIWES placement duties, among others (Ejiofor & Orji, 2015; Oladimeji et al., 2017).

One outstanding challenge re-echoed by most of the interviewed sandwich undergraduates was on time and timing. While some maintained that SIWES was not supposed to be part of their programme owing to the part-time arrangement, others buttress that the *“lack of time to learn new things”*, especially in old age, is quite challenging. In a nutshell, the challenges of the sandwich undergraduates towards SIWES highlight the following questions:

- If SIWES is to provide an avenue for learning how to work in the industry related to one's area of study, and "most of them are already working," What other work placement should they be looking for in SIWES?
- SIWES requires dedication of time to learn and serve in an establishment, to secure contacts for possible employment after graduation (Ogunde & Idialu, 2019). However, for most sandwich undergraduates, the aim of the part-time programme is for the degree, which is expected to earn them promotions in their respective jobs. What then is the need to serve another establishment, and where is the time for such service expected to be carved out from?
- Lack of morale to undertake the SIWES programme, even among the unemployed sandwich undergraduates, borders on poor remuneration – a one-time payment of N15,000 (fifteen thousand Naira), with the demand of putting in a minimum of 3 months of industrial attachment is unrealistic (Ogunde & Idialu, 2019). How to improve the morale of both students and supervisors towards SIWES objectives requires attention, among others.

What is the outcome of the SIWES programme for you?

The response to this question was exclusively for those who are believed to have partaken in the SIWES programme, being the final year undergraduate sandwich students (Olajakpoke & Ojo, 2020). The results showed disappointment concerning expected outcomes. Thus, the evaluation of the SIWES programme among sandwich undergraduates appears largely unsatisfactory. The response from the interviews can be summarized in this statement:

I have completed my SIWES, and I have submitted the logbook. The remaining thing to be completed is writing my research project, and I will be free! (Final year student, from Nsukka).

This research indicates that these students primarily engage in SIWES to simply fulfil logbook requirements necessary for their graduation (Oladimeji, 2024; Olajakpoke & Ojo, 2020). Consequently, this approach undermines the fundamental objectives of the SIWES programme for the sandwich students, which include gaining practical industrial skills and experiences, preparing for post-graduation work demands, exposure to unique working conditions, machinery not available in educational institutions, and establishing connections aiding in the school-to-work transition.

Contrary to these outcomes, studies demonstrate that the effectiveness of the SIWES programme surpasses mere logbook completion and swift graduation. Chukwuedo (n.d.) discovered that SIWES is positively associated with skill acquisition. Similarly, Anyaeneh and Ochuba (2019) concurred, highlighting the programme's role in developing employable skills such as typing, time management, innovation, and teamwork enhancement, among others. Hence, the situation of the sandwich undergraduates differs due to the distinct challenges and peculiarities inherent in the programme.

Conclusion

The title "We Don't Have Time to Learn New Things": University Sandwich-Undergraduates' Peculiarities and Challenges in Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) Programme encapsulates the essence of a critical examination of this subset's encounters within the SIWES initiative. These undergraduates, navigating through a condensed academic schedule amidst sandwich programmes, encounter multifaceted hurdles that influence their approach, commitment, and outcomes within this pivotal experiential learning endeavour. The assessment of the SIWES programme among sandwich undergraduates reveals a concerning disparity between its intended objectives and the actual outcomes. While the programme is designed to equip students with practical industrial skills, expose them to real-world working conditions, and facilitate a smoother transition into the workforce, the predominant motivation among these students seems to be the mere completion of logbook requirements for graduation. This discrepancy undermines the core essence of the SIWES initiative, jeopardizing its potential to foster a competent and job-ready workforce.

Despite broader research affirming the positive impact of the SIWES programme in skill acquisition and professional development, the unique circumstances faced by the sandwich undergraduates pose distinct challenges. The findings underscore a crucial need for targeted interventions and strategic reforms within the programme to address the specific hurdles encountered by these students. To ensure the SIWES programme aligns with its intended objectives, there's a pressing necessity for tailored approaches that reorient the focus of the sandwich students towards actively engaging with the programme's opportunities for skill enhancement and practical learning, beyond the fulfillment of graduation prerequisites. This shift in approach holds the promise of not just meeting academic requirements but also nurturing a workforce better prepared for the demands of the industrial landscape.

Recommendations

Based on the identified challenges and disparities within the SIWES programme for sandwich undergraduates, here are five recommendations to enhance its effectiveness:

1. **Revised Program Orientation and Awareness Campaigns:** Universities should initiate comprehensive orientation programmes and awareness campaigns specifically tailored for sandwich undergraduates. These initiatives should emphasize the real-world benefits of the SIWES programme beyond logbook completion, highlighting the practical skills and industry exposure that can significantly contribute to their future careers.
2. **Tailored Mentorship and Guidance:** Coordination offices should implement mentorship programmes connecting sandwich students with industry professionals or alumni who can provide guidance and mentorship throughout their SIWES experience. This personalized support can offer insights, advice, and encouragement, steering students towards actively engaging in skill acquisition and practical learning opportunities during their industrial work experiences.
3. **Enhanced Evaluation Mechanisms:** Departments should introduce robust evaluation methods that measure and recognize the practical skills and competencies acquired by sandwich undergraduates during their SIWES tenure. This could involve structured assessments or portfolios showcasing their applied knowledge and experiences beyond logbook entries, providing a comprehensive overview of their learning outcomes.
4. **Supportive Institutional Policies:** Departments should propose to the authorities and advocate for institutional policies that incentivize active participation and engagement in the SIWES programme beyond logbook requirements. This might involve recognizing and rewarding exemplary performance, offering incentives for outstanding contributions during industrial experiences, or integrating SIWES achievements into academic transcripts or certifications.
5. **Industry-Integrated Curriculum Development:** This cannot be overemphasized. Collaborating with industry to refine the SIWES curriculum, aligning it more closely with current industry demands and technological advancements. This adaptation ensures that sandwich undergraduates receive relevant and up-to-date training during their industrial experiences, preparing them adequately for the workforce.

Implementing these recommendations could help bridge the gap between the intended objectives and actual outcomes of the SIWES programme for sandwich undergraduates,

fostering a more robust and effective experiential learning platform that aligns with their career aspirations and industry demands.

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