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Feedback from Technical University Fashion Students On Preparations for Semester-Out Industrial Attachment

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ABSTRACT: *This paper sought feedback from Technical University Higher National Diploma (HND) Fashion Students on the adequacy of their preparations for their Semester-Out Industrial Attachment (S-OIA) programme. The paper adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design and used a semi-structured questionnaire to collect data from 199 third year HND Fashion Students from five public Technical Universities in Ghana. The feedback from the students showed varied levels of dissatisfaction about the school-based preparations they went through prior to the S-O IA programme. Even though majority of the students affirmed that the school-based preparations made were necessary, it was obviously not helpful to many in view of the percentage of respondents who were informed on the benefits of the programme during the school-based orientation. It was therefore suggested that Technical Universities Industrial Liaison offices adopt and strictly adhere to the school-based preparation protocols and processes.*

KEYWORDS: students, industrial attachment, school-based preparations, liaison offices, feedback

INTRODUCTION

Technical Universities in Ghana have a mandate under the Technical Universities' Act (Act 922, 2016) to promote higher education in engineering, science and technology based disciplines, technical and vocational education and training, applied arts and related

disciplines by producing quality, career-focused and practical graduates to contribute to economic development. The institutions are mandated to run career-centered and practical oriented programmes such as Fashion Design.

The fashion Design programme is one of the career and practical oriented areas studied under Creative or Applied Arts in Ghanaian Technical Universities at the Higher National Diploma (HND) level. The courses studied include Creative Design related courses, Clothing and Textile Manufacture, Management and Technology, Beauty Culture, Fashion Merchandising, Entrepreneurship, Communication Skills, Information Communication Technology (ICT), and African Studies among others (NABPTEX Fashion Design Syllabus [FDS], 2001; Competency Based Learning/Training [CBL/T] Curriculum, 2008-2009).

With human capital development is at the heart of the semester-out industrial attachment programme, it is meant for students to gain practical, managerial and or hands-on experience that pertain to the programme of study. Like general industrial attachments, the semester-out industrial attachments are platforms for students to translate theory into practice, and in the opinion Rice and Tucker (1986) acquire effective work habits which can be a tremendous aid in personal life as well as in employment.

For the purposes of realising the essence and objectives of Technical University education in human resource development, and to address the challenges of industry with regards to highly trained technical personnel, it is imperative for the students to acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge and technical skills. Research findings show that this can be accomplished through institutional support and collaboration as well as strong school-industry linkage (Matamande, Nyikahadzoi, Taderera & Mandimika, n.d.; Donkor, Nsoh & Mitchual, 2009; Adjei et al., 2014; Biney-Aidoo, Antiaye & Oppong, 2014). The paper focused on seeking response from Technical University Higher National Diploma (HND) Fashion Students on the adequacy of their preparations for their Semester-Out Industrial Attachment (S-OIA) programme.

Studies on industrial attachment (IA) implementation in other institutions of higher learning continue to receive wide attention in countries such as Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Nigeria and Ghana. A review of which guided the current study in identifying areas of interest in internships conducted by other researchers, and in identifying gaps in methodologies used by other researchers. The review further helped to identify the areas of need, in the current paper the need for students' feedback on S-O IA and confirmed the need for this study.

Among nine cases reviewed, most of the studies have as their focus beneficiaries of general vacation IA from tertiary institutions studying programmes other than Fashion Design (Osman et al., 2008; Donkor et al., 2009; Oladiran et al., 2012; Owusu-Acheampong et al.; 2014; Biney-Aidoo et al., 2014). For instance, in Malaysia, Osman et al. (2008) discussed

the perceptions of the undergraduate students from Civil Engineering Department on their industrial training programme in Kebangsaan University on how they can minimize their time and cost for the placement process. Karunaratne and Perera (2015) also studied students' perception on the effectiveness of industrial internship programme. The objective was to explore the effectiveness of the industrial internship programme offered by Department of Textile of the University of Moratuwa. Oladiran et al. (2012) also studied managing the challenges of industrial work experience scheme in developing workforce among the youths in south-west Nigeria.

Donkor et al. (2009) in Ghana studied organisational issues and challenges of supervised industrial attachment of a technical and vocational teacher education programme with focus on lecturers, students and workplace supervisors. Owusu-Acheampong et al. (2014) also focused on students of the then Cape Coast Polytechnic in Ghana. They studied students' perspectives, conceptions and misconceptions on industrial attachment. The readings also revealed that Amponsah et al. (2014) carried out assessment of the relevance and experience of undergraduate internship programme with their focus on University of Cape Coast Psychology students in Ghana, while Adjei et al. (2014) examined industrial attachment in Polytechnic education as an approach to polytechnic-industry nexus in human capital development. Though the review revealed research areas of interests in many of those earlier studies, they further show the differences from the current study in varied ways, they do underscore the importance of the current study.

Gap: Among the studies on industrial attachment also referred to as internship, only Biney-Aidoo et al. (2014) focused on industrial attachment experiences of students of then Polytechnic Fashion Design and Textiles programme for an entire semester, making scholarly engagement in that regard scanty. That limitation on the semester-out IA for the fashion design programme makes this study very significant. Apart from providing a wider all-inclusive empirical study, the present study sought to find out whether the objectives of the S-O IA programme are being achieved or not; and to investigate the challenges being faced by students; to reveal the benefits accruing to students during the S-O IA period if any; and to find out how to avoid situations where the objectives guiding the S-O IA will not be hindered. These important issues prompted the researchers to assess the adequacy of preparations learners go through prior to the S-O IA programme which is aimed at increasing the number of opportunities for Fashion Design students to acquire relevant competencies, knowledge, skills, and attitudes so as to justify the investment made by all stakeholders into their development. Currently, there is no specific documented information on the challenges and benefits accruing to Technical University Fashion students in Ghana with regard to students' school-based preparations prior to embarking on the S-O IA programme. Hence, the need for responses from the Fashion students who have gone through the programme, to serve as basis for the revision of the programme if need be to enhance the preparation of students.

Thus the goal of the larger study was to seek feedback from the HND Fashion students, documenting their challenges with the S-O IA programme so as to support Technical Universities in Ghana in their decisions to administer the programme more effectively. Consequently, the objective of the current paper was to assess the preparations Technical University Fashion students in Ghana made prior to their semester-out industrial attachment programme and identify the challenges they went through in the preparations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Preparations made by the HND Fashion Students Prior to Semester-Out Industrial Attachment Programme

The Fashion Design and Technology programme is taught over six semesters; sixteen weeks each and offers specialisation in the third year (NABPTEX FDS, 2001; CBL/T Curriculum, 2008-2009; Kumasi Polytechnic, 2009). Currently, eight Technical Universities train students in HND Fashion Design in Ghana. While some Technical Universities have shifted to using the new CBL/T syllabus in Fashion Design (Biney-Aidoo et al., 2014), others still use the traditional syllabus and the rest use both syllabi (a hybrid of the two) for teaching the Fashion Design programme.

The CBL/T approach to students' industrial attachment (IA) is aimed at ensuring that the fashion students have more opportunities in industrial practice. It forms part of an important ingredient for learning in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Technical Universities. Technical Universities have therefore incorporated in their training schemes this element of the Industrial Attachment programme which is also referred to as the semester-out industrial attachment (S-O IA), to fulfill the career-oriented practical training needs. This makes the HND programmes relevant and industry-friendly (Nyarko, 2011 as cited in Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a).

The IA is a well-structured skill training programme designed to expose and prepare staff and students in institutions of higher learning for the industrial work situation. It forms part of the approved standard academic structure intended for students and trainers to get involved in the world-of-work and the new technological innovations in industry (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a). It is meant for students and staff to gain practical, managerial and or hands-on experience that pertain to the area or course of study for which they are undergoing.

Also termed internship or work-based learning, IA is a systematic on the job training for white collar and professional careers, therefore, students are expected to practice the things they learned in school (Effah et al., 2014). It has increasingly become a significant element of training as employers continue to demand for fully trained human capital (resource). It is similarly referred to as workplace experience learning (WEL) and explained to mean the involvement of learners in a structured workplace learning during which they are expected to demonstrate their learning of a designated set of skills/competencies related to the programme (COTVET, 2012 as cited in Biney-Aidoo et al., (2014). It is likewise described

as student's work experience (SIWES), a skill training programme designed to expose and prepare students in institutions of higher learning for industrial work situations they are likely to meet after graduation (Okorie, 2001 as cited in Oladiran et al., (2012).

A study by Donkor, Nsoh and Mitchual (2009) indicates that though students' fields of study have links with their attachment experience and so these students have signaled that the programme should be continued, they are faced with many challenges which have to be fixed to make the programme very effective.

Role of the Industrial Liaison Office

Policy documents sighted in some of the Technical Universities (TUs) suggest the significance of the establishment and the activities of the Technical University Industrial Liaison Office (TUILO) as key to the success of IAs (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a). Some of the basic highlights of the role of the TUILO include organising training workshops for lecturers on the conduct of the IA supervision exercise; organising kick-off meetings to educate students prior to the start of the IA programme; arranging placement for students for the industrial attachment programme; visiting organisations before the IA exercise commences and in-between the IA to check on students participation; discussing with industry-based officers matters relating to the training programme; surveying any new training places for industrial training and arranging for educational visits; arranging and supervising industrial and educational trips for students and staff among others.

An effective Technical University ILO is expected to operate within almost all the roles identified above with experienced staff and to hold the sole responsibility with the collaboration of all staff, departmental coordinators & lecturers of organising all formal students' industrial attachment related activities. Donkor *et al.* (2009) affirmed the position of the CBL/T (2008-2009) and Biney-Aidoo *et al.* (2014) that there should be a member of staff of the department (Industrial Attachment Coordinator) responsible for pre-attachment orientation of students, record keeping, general communication, and contact with students and host organisation. To achieve a successful, meaningful and fulfilling work-based learning (WBL) experiences for students the centralised work placement unit must also have clear guidelines and experienced staff (CBL/T Curriculum, 2008-2009; Garavan & Murphy, 2001; Collin & Tynjalla, 2003) as cited in Karunaratne and Perera (2015). It is therefore prudent to examine the key school-based preparation processes fashion students are taken through prior to the S-O I A programme to ascertain their adequacy or inadequacy, as these activities are critical to successful S-O IA programme.

First of all, the TUILOs are expected to create useful linkage with industry (Adjei *et al.*, 2014; Effah *et al.*, 2014) through which they fulfil their mandate. For instance, an industrial analysis survey was conducted in January, 2007 as part of the preparation for CBL/T implementation. The study identified at the time a total of 57 companies in Accra, Tema

and Kumasi who were willing to accept Fashion students for Out-house IA (S-O IA) though only a handful responded when it mattered most (Biney-Aidoo *et al.*, 2014).

Secondly, within their mandate, the TUILOs assume the responsibility to ensure flawless relationship between industry and the institution (Matamande *et al.*, n.d.). They do this by corresponding with industry on behalf of the Technical University staff and students. For instance, correspondence sighted indicates that in Ho and Takoradi Technical Universities, the ILOs are expected to facilitate the process by issuing introduction letters to TUFSs who embark on S-O IA (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a; Ho Polytechnic, 2016). Whiles the Ho Technical University liaison office issues only manual application forms of students to the host organisations, the Takoradi TUILO has taken the process a notch higher by directing students embarking on internship to access industrial attachment letters on-line on the institution's website (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a) with which they source for placement in organisations (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a; Ho Polytechnic, 2015).The TUILOs are similarly expected to receive the completed application forms from the students prior to the S-O IA, and receive feedback from assessment of student interns by supervisors in the form of reports and assignments from host organisations.

It is expected that prospective student interns prepare prior to the semester-out industrial attachment programme. This include activities such as field trips, be informed of relevant placement opportunities, and benefits of the S-O IA during orientation programmes or kick-off meetings, to be helped in looking for placements, to be issued with log books and attachment/introduction letters to their host organisations (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a, Ho Polytechnic, 2012; Biney-Aidoo et al., 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design to provide answers to the research questions raised. Third year HND Fashion Design students in all Technical Universities which were running the Fashion Design programme with either the Traditional or Competency Based Learning/Training (CBL/T) curriculum were purposively targeted for the study. The total population of HND Fashion students in the five Universities was 357.

Simple random sampling was used to sample ninety-four (94) representatives from one of the institutions (A) because their student population was high at the time of data collection. On the other hand, all third year HND Fashion students in the rest of the institutions (B, C, D, and E) were included in the study because student turn out on the day of data collection was generally low in those four institutions. The total sample for the study was 221. Data was collected with a questionnaire designed to have both close-ended and open-ended items, to allow for in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis. The data were analysed with the aid of Statistical Program for Service Solutions to generate frequency and percentage tables and figures for discussion.

Table one presents the sampling frame for the study.

Institution	Population	Sample
A	105	94
B	109	44
C	63	37
D	44	22
E	36	24
Total	**357**	**221**

Table1: Sampling Frame
Source: Field Data, 2016

The retrieval rate of the questionnaire was 90.0% which means, 199 students returned their answered questionnaires.

1. Results and Discussion

Personal Information

Institution	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq.	%	*Freq.*	%	*Freq.*	%
A	14	7	77	38.7	91	45.7
C	2	1	19	9.5	21	10.6
E	2	1	20	10.1	22	11.1
B	6	3	22	11.1	28	14.1
D	6	3	31	15.6	37	18.6
Total	**30**	**15.1**	**169**	**84.9**	**199**	**100**

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Institutions and Gender
Source: Field Data, 2016

Table 2 shows that 46 % of the respondents were from A; 10.6 % from C; 11% from E; 14 % from B and 18.6 % from D. Majority of respondents (84.9 %) were females and the males were 15.1 %. Biney-Aidoo et al. (2014) also found more females than males studying Fashion.

Distribution of Respondents by Place of Attachment

Figure 1 illustrates that the majority (92%) of the respondents had their attachment with private host organisations. In that category, students from A formed 43.7 %; their counterparts from C 10.6%; those from E 11%; B and D 13.6% and 13 % respectively.

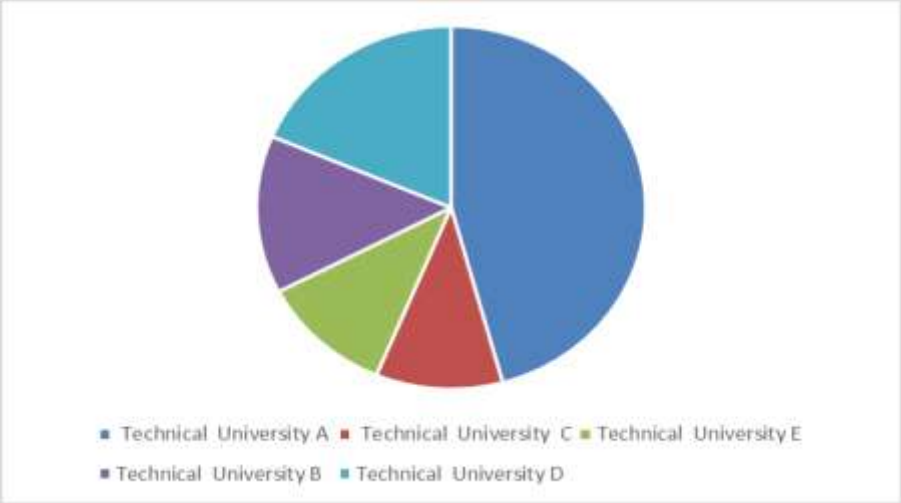

Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Place of Attachment

Source: Field Data, 2016

Table 3 indicates that very few (8 %) had their attachment with public organisations. Respondents from D formed the highest (5.5 %) percentage of students who got placement in public organisations, followed by their counterparts from A with 2 %. The result seems to confirm the assertion of Biney-Aidoo et al. (2014) that most IA companies are privately owned.

Significantly, the private organisations have been very supportive of the IA particularly the S-O IA programme. In a rather sharp contrast, it shows from the results that not many public organisations in the fashion industry are available as IA companies. The available few seem to be sited at the locations of D and A Technical Universities. Biney-Aidoo et al. (2014) also found that all fifty (50) companies who had received students for IA over the past five years in collaboration with the Accra Technical University were privately owned. Some of the companies were owned by past students of the Accra Technical University Fashion department who had established their own companies and as Alumni, were willing to receive students from their alma-mater for IA.

Institution	Place of Attachment					
	Private Organisation		Public Organisation		Total	
	Freq.	%	*Freq.*	%	*Freq.*	%
A	87	43.7	4	2.0	91	45.7
C	21	10.6	0	0.0	21	10.6
E	22	11.1	0	0.0	22	11.1
B	27	13.6	1	0.5	28	14.1
D	26	13.1	11	5.5	37	18.6
Total	**183**	**92.0**	**16**	**8.0**	**199**	**100.0**

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Place of Attachment
Source: Field Data, 2016

Preparations made by the HND Fashion Students Prior to Semester-Out Industrial Attachment Programme

This section sought to find out the extent of preparations the respondents made prior to the semester-out industrial attachment programme. As indicated earlier, the preparations that the students need to make prior to the semester-out industrial attachment programme include field trips, vacation IA, orientation programmes or kick-off meetings, to be issued with log books and attachment/introduction letters to their host organisations.

Sources of Knowledge about Available Industries	Freq.	%
Lecturer	106	53.3
Self	33	16.6
Friend	25	12.6
Colleague	15	7.5
Family	9	4.5
Liaison Office	8	4.0
Department	3	1.5
Total	**199**	**100.0**

Table 4: Respondents' Sources of Knowledge about Industries before S-O IA
Source: Field Data, 2016

Table 4 shows that most (53.3%) of the respondents had knowledge about the industry from their lecturers; 16.6 % and 12.6% had personal knowledge and from friends

respectively. About 8% had knowledge from colleagues; 4.5% said they had knowledge about the industry through family members and 4% and 1.5% said they had the knowledge about the industry from the liaison officers and the Heads of their Department (HOD) respectively.

The sources of respondents' knowledge are within and outside the school environment, but the official sources available to fashion students are embedded in the very operations of the Technical University Industrial Liaison Offices (TUILOs) established (CBL/T, 2008 - 2009; Ho Polytechnic, 2012; Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a). The TUILOs in collaboration with departmental coordinators in most cases are expected to ensure that IA companies meet the set standards before the students send their introduction letters (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a; Biney-Aidoo et al., 2014). The TUILOs/ students' choice of placement in the face of limited placement openings still remain critical as it informs the quality of experiences acquired by students. Hence, the need for adequate preparation in this regard.

Establishment of Contact	Frequency	%
Through the vacation I A	116	60.1
Through guest lecturer	35	18.1
Through a colleague	15	7.8
Through Field trips	12	6.2
Through HOD	9	4.7
Through Media (telephone/internet)	6	3.1
Total	**193**	**100.0**

Table 5: Respondents' Means of Establishing Contact with Industries for S-O IA. Source: Field Data, 2016

Table 5 indicates that most (60 %) of respondents established contact with industry through the vacation industrial attachment programme while 18 %, 7.8%, 6.2%, 4.7%, and 3.1% did same through a guest lecturer, a colleague, field trips, HOD and through the media (telephone/ internet) respectively.

The results demonstrate that TUFSs could establish contacts with industry through their lecturers, friends and family and colleagues apart from the liaison office. Probably, students could also take advantage of co-curricular activities Fashion students and the Technical Universities engage in from time to time in the course of study (example seminars, sports, invitation to social gatherings such as fairs, fashion week shows or exhibitions, etc.) to expand their social networks in establishing contacts with industry. These plausible ways are meant to among other factors gain press attention to support brand growth (Senam, 2018) and promote networking which is described as the entrepreneur's lifeblood. Indeed, Burke (2009) described such network as too important a skill to leave to chance.

It is therefore encouraging that many (60.1%) of the students mentioned that they established contact with the industry during the vacation industrial attachment period. On the other hand, only 6.2% used the field trips to establish contact with the industry. Adjei et al. (2014) posited that field trips are rarely organised by the Technical Universities due to lack of funding. In a situation where students' competencies in industrial practices remain key to the success of their training, these Technical Universities may have to increase their budget allocations for field trips to the industry.

Students' link with industry and information on operations of industry are all part of the preparations which provide credible means for reducing the reality shock of transitioning from school to work (Garavan & Murphy, 2001; Collin & Tynjalla, 2003 as cited in Karunaratne and Perera (2015).

Introduction of Students to the Industry

Majority (83.8%) of the respondents sent an introduction letter to the industry. The introductory letters are part of the IA documents granted students during the internship (Ho Polytechnic, 2012; Biney-Aidoo et al., 2014; Kumasi Polytechnic, 2009). It is reported that since 2008, a new application method for industrial training, which is known as SMPLAI, has been introduced to the civil engineering students in University Kebangsaan, Malaysia. By using the SMPLAI method via online system, students can minimize their time and cost for the placement process (Osman et al., 2008). The manual process may have to be replaced with much faster, effective and efficient method, most probably the e-methods tried and tested in the University Kebangsaan, Malaysia to enable all students send their letters of introduction online.

Participation of Respondents in the Orientation Activities

Regarding students' participation in school-based orientation, the statistics showed that majority (85.8 %) participated in the orientation organised by the schools prior to the S-O IA programme, while 14.2 % did not. It is generally accepted that students should be well guided for the internship programme so that they can understand the university's expectations and the expectations of the industrial training provider, as well as the trainee's expectations. It is however worrying that some of the students in this study did not participate in the programme. These students stand to lose first-hand information critical to their success in the internship programme. Internship orientation programmes, whether organised by the school or industry minimise the expectation gap among all the parties involved and strengthen the industrial relationship and students' confidence (Karunaratne & Perera, 2015).

Benefits	Freq.*	%
Learnt the importance of the S-O I A	67	39.6
Expectation of the IA made known to respondent	64	37.9
Fair idea about the industries learnt	52	30.8
The rules and regulations governing the S-O l A were given to the respondents	34	20.1
The respondents got to know placement openings available to student interns	10	5.9
The Security Precautions to observe were learnt	3	1.8
Total	**230**	

Table 6: Benefits Derived by Respondents from the Orientation
Source: Field Data, 2016

Table 6 indicates that 39.6 % of respondents learnt the importance of the S-O I A programme; 37.9%, 30.8%, 20%, and 5.9% of them said the expectations of the S-O IA were made known to them; they got a fair idea about the industries; they were given the rules and regulations governing S-O I A they got to know placement openings available to student interns respectively. One-point eight percent (1.8 %) said they learnt about the security precautions to observe on the S-O IA programme.

All the benefits the respondents mentioned in Table 6 are very important in matters concerning the S-O IA programme, and underscore the need for all the students to be present at the pre-placement kick-off meetings.

Eight point five percent (8.5%) respondents, who did not participate in the school-based orientation were from one institution. While some said that they were not aware of the programme, others claimed they were not in school at the time of the orientation, while the rest indicated that the orientation was not organised in their institution. Institutions are supposed to organise the orientation for their students to make the programme successful as per the S-O IA programme guide (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a; CBL/T, 2008-2009; Biney-Aidoo et al., 2014).

Majority (88.8 %) of the students affirmed that the school-based preparations made were necessary, while minority of 11.2 % students said the preparations were not necessary. The result therefore agrees with the impression that students are interested and generally have good perception about the industrial attachment activity (Owusu-Acheampong et al., 2014). Some of the students (38 %) however suggested it would have been helpful to have other preparations such as seminar and fieldtrips organised on the S-O IA prior to the commencement of the programme. The TUILOs have that sole responsibility to constantly

educate the TUFSs on the pre-placement activities and the impact on the S-O IA programme (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014b; Biney-Aidoo et al., 2014).

Suggestions made by the students on pre-placement activities i.e., field trips and seminar are timely and brilliant. While it emphasises the significance of such school-based preparation, it also implies that some Technical Universities did not carry out such preparation for their students. This result corroborates the position of Adjei et al. (2014) when they indicated that field trips are scarcely conducted for the Technical University students. Indeed, high quality education can only be attained after taking cognizance of the views of the key stakeholders including students (Gumbe et al., 2012).

Proximity of Industry Location to Respondents' Residence

One of the preparations for the S-O IA is looking for an industry near the student's residential community. While 60.3% of them reported that where they did the attachment was far from their places of residence, the locations were close to 39.7% of the respondents' residencies. Consequently, 16.7% (out of the 60.3%) who lived far from the place of attachment had to relocate their residence close to the industry while the remaining 83.3% did not relocate their residence. The result is consistent with that of Donkor et al. (2009); students similarly complained that travelling from their homes to the workplace was very inconvenient. The implication is that of fatigue and perhaps financial challenge. This finding is further buttressed by Oladiran et al. (2012) who reported that student interns are financially challenged during internship. The result further justifies the position held by the Takoradi Technical Industrial liaison Office (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a) to allow prospective students interns to choose their workplace close to their residences.

Three groups emerged from the result regarding the proximity of industry location to students' residence: most of the respondents (60.3%) lived far from the place of attachment, the 16.7% (out of the 60.3%) who relocated closer to the place of attachment and the 39.7% who were placed close to the place of attachment. Clearly the first and second groups of student interns whose residences were not close to industry were inconvenienced. The situation of the third group raises the discussion of relevance or convenience, both very fundamental in the nature of experiences the students acquire at the end of the programme. The decision by Takoradi Technical University on workplace choice was apparently well meant (Takoradi Polytechnic, 2014a). The decision clearly was to relieve prospective student interns of such financial implications and of trekking long distances from their residences to the industry and vise-versa.

Challenges Fashion Students go through in Preparing for their Semester-Out Industrial Attachment Programme

Statistics on challenges encountered by respondents during their preparations for the S-O IA are shown in Figure 2. Twenty point six percent (20.6 %) said they lacked information on placement openings and 10.1% said they lacked information on school expectations. Additionally, 7% of the respondents said not getting placement openings were equally

challenges; others (4%) also complained about the delay of school orientation. Owusu-Acheampong et al. (2014) also found that greater percentage of the respondents in their study had difficulty getting an industry for attachment. They therefore recommended that the Cape Coast Technical University (then Polytechnic) take up the responsibility by assisting students to search for places of attachment, even though students elsewhere continue to insist that looking for their own placement is the best approach (Donkor et al., 2009). Afonja et al. (2005), Donkor et al. (2009), Owusu-Acheampong et al. (2014) and Biney-Aidoo et al. (2014) also reported the difficulties students face in securing industrial placements in different studies. The challenges the student interns encountered cannot be ignored as they could have serious consequences on the quality of the programme. Clearly, students cannot solve these problems on their own and so need professional help from the TUILOs.

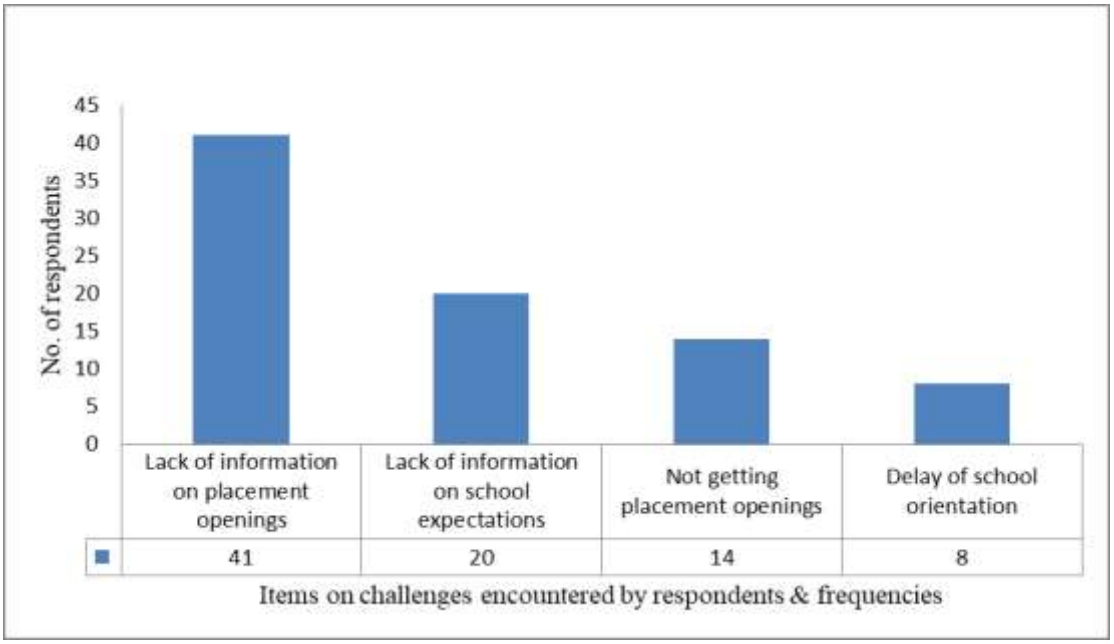

Figure 2: Challenges Encountered by Respondents during their Preparations for S-OIA Programme.
Source: Field Data, 2016

CONCLUSIONS

Generally, the feedback on the study showed varied levels of dissatisfaction about the preparations the respondents went through prior to embarking on the S-O IA programme. Even though majority (88.8%) of the respondents affirmed that the school-based preparations they made were necessary and by inference hint of the need for its continuation, only relatively few (39.6%) respondents who participated in the school-based orientation were informed on the benefits of the S-O IA programme. Moreover, the

statistics showed that the respondents identified lack of information on placement openings as a major challenge. Further, majority (83.8%) of the respondents had to send introduction letters by the manual process in this technological era. Thus, the preparations Technical University Fashion students made prior to the semester-out industrial attachment programme were inadequate.

Implication to Research and Practice

The study identified some inadequacies and challenges in the preparations Technical Universities' HND Fashion Design make prior to embarking on S-O IA programme. The following measures were therefore recommended to help address the inadequacies and challenging issues raised in order to improve upon the programme:

1. Because the study pointed to inadequacies in the preparations the students went through prior to the S-O I A programme, it is recommended that the Technical Universities work together and adopt common strategies that will ensure adequate and stress-free school-based preparations. For instance, the Technical University Industrial Liaison Offices may have to constantly review and improve upon their strategies for the benefit of the students and S-O I A programme. They could commonly adopt the school-based preparation protocols and processes prescribed in the new CBL/T Fashion Design Curriculum (2008-2009) with some modifications such as the use of more effective e-methods of application to Industrial Attachment companies by students, and the involvement of students in decision making particularly, concerning placement choices in order to roll out a mutually beneficial S-OIA programme. It is further suggested that other more effective and efficient strategies such as field trips and seminar be included in disseminating information on benefits of the S-O IA programme during the school-based preparation.

2. It is further recommended that the manual process students use in sending letters may have to be replaced with much faster, effective and efficient method, most probably the e-methods tried and tested in the University Kebangsaan, Malaysia to enable all students send their letters of introduction online.

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