

Strengthening Vocational Education and Training in Correctional Institutions in Nigeria through the Implementation of Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework Policy

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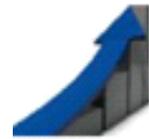
Abstract

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in correctional institutions in Nigeria exists for over six decades. However, VET programmes are not in line with the Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) policy. This paper therefore, aimed at strengthening VET in correctional institutions in Nigeria through the implementation of the NSQF policy. Specifically, the paper briefly traced the historical background of correctional institutions, legal framework for establishing correctional institutions in Nigeria, the rationale for VET in correctional institutions, defined NSQF, stated the objectives of NSQF, discussed the structure of NSQF, described NSQF policy implementing bodies, mapped out implementing strategies of NSQF policy in the correctional institutions and finally a conclusion was drawn.

Keywords: Strengthening, Vocational Education and Training, Correctional Institutions, Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework, Policy.

Introduction

Every society has its own set of people with criminal and delinquent behaviours. The behaviours of these people are normally converted through reformation and vocational rehabilitation in correctional institutions. Sara and Bukar (2012) simply defined correctional institutions as institutions designed for the confinement, reformation and rehabilitation of offenders. These institutions include prisons and reformatory institutions. According to Mays and Winfree (1998) prison is a correctional institution meant for the treatment of adult criminals whereas reformatory institution is a correctional institution meant for the treatment, training and

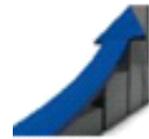


social/vocational rehabilitation of young offenders. In this context, therefore, prisons and reformatory institutions are interchangeably used to mean the same thing.

Initially correctional institutions were established to punish or remove deviant members from the community or society rather than for correction. This was evident because, in most of the ancient cities and communities, it was the duty of the community leader to design the mode of punishment for people who were found to be socially outcast. For instance, as reported by Ugwoegbu (1993), in Igbo land, in the olden days, people were dealt with by sending them on exile, sold into slavery or made to offer sacrifice to appease the gods. Similarly, Crowther (1978) noted that, in the olden days, correctional institutions in the Islamic Emirate of Northern Nigeria were used to punish those who flouted the Islamic laws. However, the quest for humane treatment of offenders came up in the early 19th century, when people started to realize that cruel and brutal treatment of offenders did not spare the society of the agony of the resultant violence. The first move to establish formal correctional institutions in Nigeria was in 1662 and this coincided with the era of colonial administration. As a result of the move, by 1862, Broad Street Prison in Lagos was established (Ugwuegbu, 1993). As rightly observed by Chikezie (cited in Sara 2010) the idea of establishing correctional institutions during the colonial era was not necessarily meant for reformation, re-education and reintegration (3Rs), rather, they were mainly intended to be punitive, characterized by hard labour and inhuman accommodation. This was so, because, the advent of colonial administration, gave rise to crop of nationalists who resisted the penetration of the regime. Therefore, it could be rightly observed that the colonial correctional institutions were mainly for those who opposed the imposition of British indirect rule.

According to Ugwoegbu (1993), the idea of reforming, re-educating and reintegrating of inmates in correctional institutions was only in the late 19th century; consequently, more correctional institutions with vocational training programmes were established. For instance, Port Harcourt prison was established in 1925, while Enugu prison was established in 1927. From that time, programmes such as, carpentry and joinery and tailoring etc. were introduced to provide Vocational Education and Training (VET).

An investigation carried out by the authors indicated that VET in the correctional institutions does not rhyme with Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) policy. Most of the VET programmes in the correctional institutions are being run independently with no coordination and synergy common in the correctional institutions. Furthermore, the NSQF is a system that recognizes and classifies skills into different levels, knowledge and competencies acquired by individuals while the present system being operated does not. As revealed by Abdullahi (2003), Sara (2010) and Abba (2016), most of the correctional institutions lack training facilities in some trades as well as qualified teaching and supporting staff. Also, where there are vocational trades, the facilities are not adequate. Thus, the issues raised, call for synergy towards strengthening VET in the correctional institutions through the implementation of NSQF policy. Strengthening simply means reinforcing something (Collins Dictionary, 2020). In this vein, reinforcing of VET becomes paramount. This paper therefore, attempts to map out strategies that could be used to implement NSQF policy in correctional institutions in Nigeria.



Legal Framework for Establishing Correctional Institutions in Nigeria

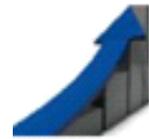
In an attempt to give legal backing and standardize correctional institutions in Nigeria, several decrees and laws were promulgated. For instance, Alemika (cited in Sara, 2010) pointed out that prison, as one of the correctional institutions, derived their existence from several statutes among which are the Prison Ordinance of 1916, Law of Nigeria, 1948 and 1958, Prison Decree No.9 of 1972 and Decree No.16 of 1986. Similarly, Sara and Bukar (2012) reported that, Prison Decree No. 16 of 1986 was reviewed and operated under Prison Act No.366 of 1990. The Act was subsequently reviewed in 2004 as Prison Act Cap P29 of 2004. The Nigerian Prison Act is charged with the responsibility of identifying the reasons behind antisocial behaviours of offenders and training them to become useful citizens in the society. In 2019, the Nigerian National Assembly passed into law a bill tagged Nigerian Correctional Service Act, 2019. The bill aimed at repealing the Prison Act Cap.P29 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004. The bill also addressed new issues that were not covered in the Prison Act of 2004. Moreover, the Act was enacted to clear rules setting out the obligations of correctional services and rights of inmates. The Correctional Service Act of 2019 was finally endorsed by President Muhammadu Buhari, on 31st July, 2019. The objectives of the Act are to:

- (a) Ensure compliance with international human rights standards and good correctional practices;
- (b) Provide enabling platform for implementation of non-custodial members;
- (c) Enhance the focus on corrections and promotion of offenders and
- (d) Establish, Institutional systematic and sustainable mechanisms to address the high number of persons awaiting trial (FRN, 2019).

Like prison, reformatory institutions are correctional institutions and are under the jurisdiction of Nigerian Correctional Service. Earlier, Alemika and Chukwuma (2001) pointed out that reformatory institutions were guided by an Act tagged Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) of 1943. The Act was subsequently amended through several legislations such as; Ordinance 44 of 1945; 22 of 1954 and 47 of 1955. Furthermore, CYPA was intended as National Law (Cap 32 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria and Lagos, 1958). CYPA was specifically enacted to give legal backing to the treatment of young offenders. As stated, in the document, the purpose of the law, among other things, is to provide for the welfare of young offenders through reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration. Abdurrahman-Mustapha (2016) reported that, the Nigeria National Assembly reviewed, transformed CYPA and passed it into law as Child Right Act (CRA) of 2003. The Act was basically made to remedy the inadequacies inherent the CYPA and other associated laws. From the foregoing, therefore, it could be understood that, the legal objectives of correctional institutions is to correct offenders through reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration as against punishment or retribution.

Rationale for Vocational Education and Training

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is a term used to describe training in an occupational area that is linked to the development of skills and knowledge for work or employment competencies (www.trainingability.edu.tre-htm.c.catched). This definition,

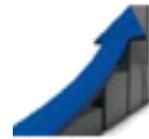


therefore, implies that VET is basically offered in correctional institutions to provide skills and knowledge necessary for employment in a chosen occupational area. Several authors have written and emphasized on the rationale for introducing Vocational Education and Training programmes in correctional institutions. For instance, Chikezie (Cited in Sara, 2010) observed that, the major reason for incorporating vocational programmes in correctional institutions is to create an avenue and enabling environment through which skills could be acquired, for the attainment of self-respect. This implies that, with the attainment of self-respect through vocational training, an ex-inmate can be able to think ahead and concentrate on a chosen occupation (trade) rather than choosing to return to criminal behaviours. Tenibaije, (2010) noted that the main objective of vocational training in correctional institutions is to enable an inmate to become self-reliant and responsible after serving his jail term. Obviously, through the acquisition of skills in various vocational areas, such as, carpentry, weaving, tailoring, shoemaking, metalworking, electrical installation, furniture making block laying, radio and TV servicing, barbing, air conditioning and refrigeration work, mat making, dyeing, pot making, etc. inmates will on discharge lead a self-reliant and responsible life.

European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (2011) observed Vocational Education Training is a means of preparing individuals for vocations in their chosen occupational areas. This has therefore emphasized the importance of vocational training to inmates. VET reduces crime and other social vices. For instance, a review of studies on 72 vocational programmes in prisons by Borton (Cited in Abdullahi, 2003) had shown that nine out of 14 studies indicated a positive effect on reducing recidivism and three out of four showed a positive effect on post release employment success. Ten out of 13 studies showed a positive effect of VET on recidivism among other things. This has clearly shown that VET has a positive effect on inmates in reducing crime in the society.

Studies carried out by Abdullahi (2003), Sara (2010) and Abba (2016), have revealed that the following VET programmes are being offered in correctional institutions in Nigeria; blacksmithing, carpentry work, furniture, bricklaying and block laying, electrical/electronics, tailoring, knitting, shoemaking, crop production, leather work, photography, painting and decoration, plumbing and pipe fitting, radio, TV work, computer training. These VET programmes lead to the sitting of Federal Labour Trade Test. However, as Abdullahi (2003) rightly noted, inmates that proved brilliant are encouraged to sit for City and Guilds (C and G), National Technical Certificate (NTC), National Business Certificate (NBC) and Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE). Again inmates that excelled in their chosen trades are given certificate of merit on discharge.

From the foregoing therefore, it could be understood that the main aim of VET in correctional institutions is to allow inmates use their time while in confinement, to improve, their academic, social, personal and vocational skills so that after their discharge, they could lead a useful and responsible life devoid of crime. This could be better achieved by training the inmates through the Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) policy in the correctional institutions.



Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework

Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework, formally National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF), is simply a system for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge, understanding and competencies acquired by individuals regardless of where and how the training or skill was acquired (NBTE, 2018). The system provides a learner with a clear statement on what to do and what to know, be it in the classroom, workplace or informally. The framework provides measure of different qualifications and how a learner can progress from one level to another. The framework is based on National Skills Qualification (NSQ) which is a measure of skills based on knowledge and competency on a particular occupation (NBTE, 2018).

Objectives of the Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework

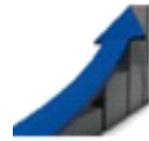
The major objectives of NSQ framework are to:

1. Ensure the quality, status, relevance and availability of TVET provisions.
2. Reduce the complexity and ambiguity of selecting competent persons to occupational positions by industry.
3. Provide training, assessment and certification opportunities for the formal, non-formal and informal TVET programmes.
4. Establish pathways and progression from non-formal and informal short courses provided by various government agencies, NGO's and industry to formal TVET programmes.
5. Narrow the gaps between what TVET graduates know and can do and the skills and knowledge that employers say they need.
6. Overcome limited progression possibilities and demands that far exceeds supply. (NBTE, 2018)

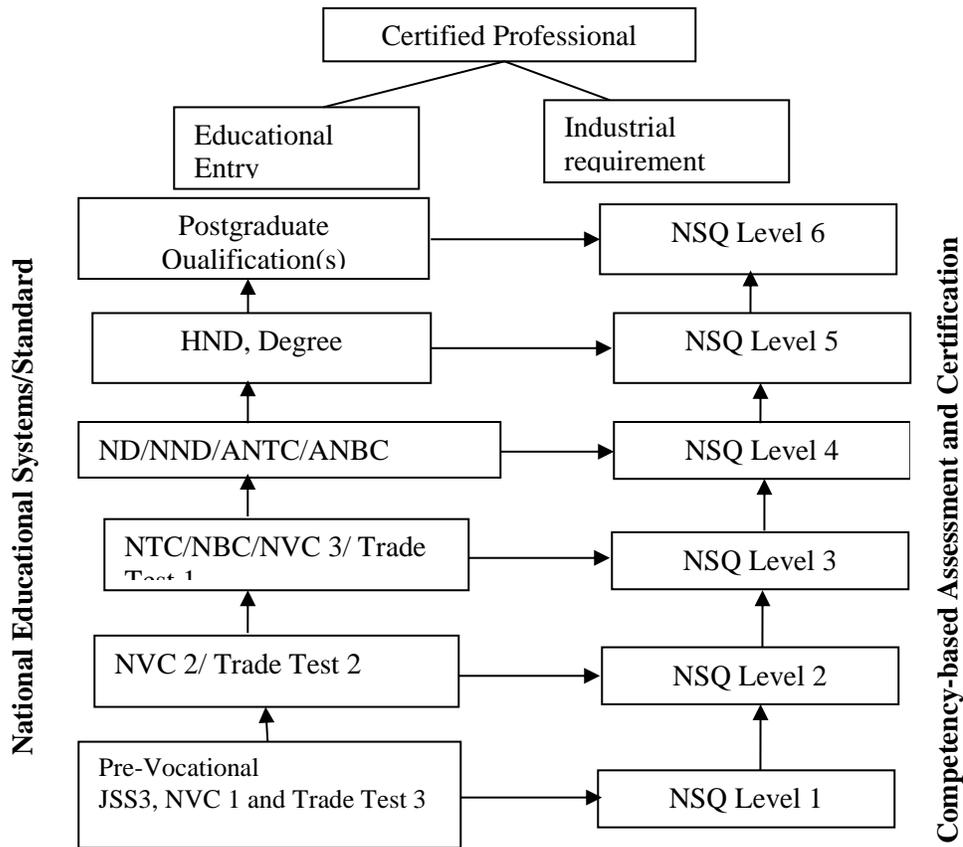
Structure of the Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework

The NSQF was structured into six levels of skills and competency corresponding to levels of employment in the Nigerian labour market. These levels are depicted below:

- Level 1: This is the level of unskilled employee
Level 2: This is a foundation level meant for basic skilled employee.
Level 3: This level is for operators or semi-skilled employees.
Level 4: This level is for skilled technicians and supervising employees.
Level 5: This level is for junior and management positions
Level 6: This level is meant to train professional engineers and other senior management officers (NBTE, 2018).



The NSQF framework is further described in a schematic diagram below for ease of understanding.

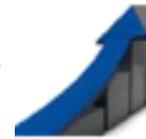


Source: NSQF Operational Manual (NBTE, 2018)

It should be noted that, NSQ is available to adults, young people, working class people, employed, and unemployed and under employed. It is also available for students and alike. Generally, NSQF policy is for skilling, up-skilling and re-skilling and one can fit at any level depending on one’s qualification and competency (NBTE, 2018).

NSQF Policy Implementing Bodies

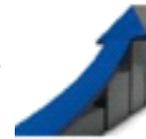
NSQF policy is meant to be implemented for training artisans. Policy basically means a plan of what to do in a particular situation that has been agreed upon officially by a group of people, organization or government (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). NBTE (2014) and NBTE (2018) described the following as bodies responsible for implementing NSQF policy;



1. NBTE: Serves as administrator/regulating body. It approves and monitors awarding bodies in ensuring that laid down procedures are adhered to, in the various NSQ training centers. They train Assessors and the Assessors are usually engaged by Training Providers.
NBTE also train internal verifiers (IVs) otherwise referred to as Internal Quality Assurance Managers (IQAM) for internal verification of assessment conducted by Assessors. NBTE also train, and keep records of External Verifiers (EVs) who are engaged by the Awarding Bodies (ABs) to ensure that procedures and best practices are followed before awarding certificate.
2. Sector Skills Councils (SSCs): This work with industry to develop occupational standard that are used to define the NSQs.
3. Awarding Bodies: These are approved centers responsible for NSQ delivery. e.g. National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB), Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB), Institute of Tourism Professionals, etc. They are approved by NBTE. Awarding bodies assist in providing qualifications and standard. They also ensure that quality of training is maintained and assessment across various centers are consistent.
4. Training Providers: These are bodies or institutions for conducting the actual prescribed training.

The list below shows the approved SSCs, ABs and TPs:

S/N	Organization	Role in NVQ Delivery
1	National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)	Regulatory Body
2	National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB)	Awarding Body (General)
3	Nigerian Institute of Welding (NIW)	Awarding Body for Welding
4	Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB)	Awarding Body for Building Related Trades
5	Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE)	Awarding Body for Engineering
6	Institute of Tourism Professionals (ITP), Lagos	Awarding Body for Hospitality
7	National Power Training Institute (NAPTIN)	Training Provider for the Power Industry
8	Industrial Training Fund (ITF)	Training Centres for Hospitality
9	Wave Crest College of Hospitality (Lagos, Ogun and Enugu)	Training Centre for Hospitality
10	C-STEMP, Abuja	Training Centre for Construction
11	Centre of Excellence for TVE, Kaduna	Training Centre for Quality Assurance Managers
12	Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna	Training Centre (General)



13	Talent and Skills Management, Kaduna	Training Provider
14	NOUN, Kaduna Study Centre, Kaduna	Training Provider
15	Yaba College of Technology, Yaba-Lagos	Training Centre (General)
16	Hussaini Adamu Federal Polytechnic Kazaure	Training Centre (General)
17	Federal Polytechnic Oko	Training Centre (General)
18	Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN)	Sector Skills Council for Engineering
19	Council for Registered Builders of Nigeria (CORBON)	Sector Skills Council for Building
20	National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR)	Sector Skills Council for Hospitality and Tourism
21	National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDC)	Sector Skills Council for Automotive Industry
22	National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR)	Training Provider for Hospitality, Travel and Tourism

NBTE (2018)

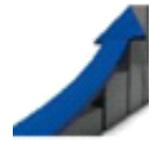
Implementing Strategies of NSQF Policy in Correctional Institutions

To implement the NSQF policy in correctional institutions, the following implementing strategies are proffered:

1. Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS) being the major custodian of correctional institutions should collaborate with NBTE in ensuring that it get registered as one of the NSQF training providers/centres. By doing so, inmates will have an NSQ certificate being recognized by both governments and industries in Nigeria.
2. NBTE has developed about 38 vocational curricula for NSQ. NPS should liaise with NBTE to ensure that other trade areas not being captured in the NBTE curriculum are prepared.
3. NPS should ensure that staff teaching trade areas are given sponsorship for further training to attain the status of Assessors.
4. For a start, level 1 and 2 NSQ training should be mounted by the custodians of the correctional institutions through the use of the prepared standard NSQ vocational curriculum.
5. NPS and other stakeholders should make sure that facilities are upgrade or provided for the implementation of NSQF policy.
6. Governments and NPS should make adequate budget allocation for the implementation of the NSQF policy.

Conclusion

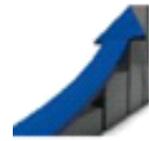
The paper discussed the legal basis and rationale for Vocational Education and Training (VET) in correctional institutions. The paper also highlighted that NSQF policy is an all-



encompassing scheme for the fact that every individual, regardless of gender and status can succeed in any NSQ programmes. Moreover, NSQ programmes can be implemented in any institution provided that requisite facilities and manpower are available. Though VET programmes in correctional institutions are not in tune with the NSQF policy, the paper has suggested some strategies that can be used to implement the policy in correctional institutions in Nigeria. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to see that the suggested strategies are implemented so that when the inmates are discharged, they can have the right qualifications and certificates that can make them to be employers of labour or employable in any sector of the economy.

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