



Repackaging Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for Sustainable National Development

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Abstract

Literature revealed that Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) facilitated the rapid development and growth of the western countries to what is today known as the first world. It is an indisputable fact that TVET is of immeasurable importance in the socio-economic life of any democracy as it aimed at making individuals well armed with skills and knowledge to enable them secure employment either by establishing a small-scale business, or by being gainfully employed thereby utilizing their skills, abilities and competencies for the overall development of the society. This paper examines the concept of TVET and its roles in national development. It x-rayed the state of TVET in our democracy considering its numerous challenges. It was found that though the government articulates its commitment to TVET through the National Policy on Education (NPE), much is yet to be done in practical terms. In view of the challenges facing TVET in our Democracy, strategies were suggested for a successful repackaging of TVET to achieve its intended purpose, among which include: boosting the image of TVET in Nigerian democracy, Involvement of TVET Professionals in TVET Policy Decisions and Matching TVET Policies with Needs Assessment.

Keywords: National Development, Repackaging, TVET, Unemployment.

Introduction

Education is a universal human right. It also is a means of achieving other human rights and it is an empowering social and economic tool. Through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the world's nations have agreed that everyone has the right to education. On realizing the importance of Education, particularly Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) both for individual and national development, the Nigerian government through the National Policy on Education (2013) articulates its commitment to Vocational Education by specifying its goals to include: providing trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology, and business particularly



at craft, advance craft, and technical levels; to provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commerce, and economic development, etc. In order to fully realize the goals of Technical Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria and gain from its contribution to the national economy, the duties of government are spelt out on the pages of the policy document.

The concern however, is how far the government has lived to its commitment. Democracy is seen as a system of government whose center and focus is the people. Ojimba (2012) noted that the educational transmission process is vital in a democracy because effective democracies are dynamic and evolving forms of government demands independent thinking by the citizenry. He further opined that there is a direct connection between education and democratic values such that in democratic societies, educational content and practice supports democratic governance. It was on this revelation that Okafor (2011) stressed that governments' commitment to general education, and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in particular be translated from paper to action. In Nigeria, TVET has long been perceived as critical to national development. Unfortunately, it has not been accorded the attention and seriousness it deserves in our democracy (Dike, 2005). The cumulative result is that today, the goals of TVET in Nigeria has been crippled by near unwillingness of the government to live up to its commitments.

Concept of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an integral part of general education and a means of preparing people for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work. The Federal Republic of Nigeria through the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2013) defined TVET as a comprehensive term referring to those aspect of the educational process which involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skill and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Vocational and technical education according to Okolocha (2012) is an educational training which encompasses knowledge, skills, competencies, structural activities, abilities, capacities and all other structural experiences for securing jobs in various sector of the economy or even enabling one to be self-dependent by being a job creator. Vocational and technical education is seen by Oluwale, Jegede and Olamide (2013) as a vehicle for the development of marketable and entrepreneurial skills, and the engine of development.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) essentially develops in the individual the knowledge, skills, and desirable attitude for legitimate work. Ojimba (2012) described TVET as a form of education whose primary aim is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupation among which includes agriculture, fine and applied arts, business, vocational trades, building, carpentry, auto mechanic, computer training etc. Iheanacho (2006) defined vocational education as that aspect of education that deals with business education,



farming, book keeping, bricklaying, among others with aims of acquiring vocational skills in these fields. Uwaifo (2009) posited that technical education is the training of technically- oriented personnel who are to be initiators, facilitators, and implementers of technological literacy that would lead to self-reliance and sustainability. Banjoko cited in Dokubo (2013) summed it all stressing that skill is a major distinguishing aspect of vocational education which makes it outstanding from liberal arts.

Technical education stresses the engineering aspect of vocational education such as electronic, electrical, mechanical and automobile works. Indeed, it involves the understanding and practical application of the basic principles of mathematics and science. Vocational and Technical Education is aimed at making individuals well-armed with skills and knowledge to enable them secure employment either by establishing a small-scale outfit, or by being gainfully employed thereby utilizing their skills, abilities and competencies. This type of education is of immeasurable importance in the socio-economic life of today's society.

Roles of TVET in National Development

The roles of Vocational and Technical Education in national development cannot be over-emphasized. Some of its roles as enumerated by Kehinde (2015) includes:

- a. Vocational and technical education helps to solve the problems of unemployment and reduces the number of people who depend on government for job. When the youths and adults are trained vocationally or technically, it would enable them to be self-reliant in different areas such as electrical, plumbing, automobile, vulcanizing, computer engineering, GSM repairs, cloths, weaving, etc.
- b. Vocational and technical education serve as a motivating force in individuals to work for the nation because it stimulates technological and industrial development through the production of competent and honest workers who are capable of utilizing the abundant natural and human resources available in a country for economy and industrial growth and development.
- c. It helps to bring about rapid economic development. The survival of individuals will ensure the survival of the country as a nation. To continually meet the needs of the present generation means there must be continued economic growth. The commitment of the Federal Government to place Nigeria amongst the top economics in the world by the year 2020 can only be realized when the vocational and technical education among others is harnessed to empower Nigerians.
- d. Through vocational and technical education, local technology can be developed by indigenous technicians and technologists. It should be emphasized here that every society has its own peculiar problems. Therefore, it will take the ingenuity of local artisans,



- craftsmen, technicians and technologists to design and fabricate tools, equipment and simple or complex machines to solve local problems. This eventually will save the nation billions of Naira or Dollars in foreign currency that would have been used in importing machines, most of which break down shortly on arrival in the country because they were not designed for our peculiar environment.
- e. Vocational and technical education is not left out in agriculture. It is needed to direct those in the sector towards making the farmer an intelligent user of our natural resources.
 - f. Vocational and technical education is needed in every aspect of our natural life. The problem of juvenile delinquency and crime can be reduced if the youths are given the necessary vocational training that will keep them busy.
 - g. Vocational and technical education is also needed to prevent waste of human resources. So far Nigeria has given very little attention to conservation of human resources. It is obvious that the waste of labour by improper employment can be largely avoided through vocational and technical training. Such training is the most potent remedy for unemployment.

State of TVET in Nigeria

It is the legitimate duty of any democratic government to put in place an educational system that will cater for the welfare of its citizen by providing them with relevant skills that makes for the socio-economic development of the society. Rosefield and Mills (2013) cited in Orinos (2014:26) argued that a true democratic government in addition to the above mission should provide her citizens with education that is skill driven which will reduce unemployment in the country. In line with this, Otamiri (2014) stated that quality Vocational and Technical Education is the type that fulfils the aspirations of individuals as it provides them with relevant skills to compete favourably in the society. Dike (2005) noted that while technical and vocational education has continued to thrive in many societies, Nigeria has neglected this aspect of education.

It cannot be denied that most vocational institutions in Nigeria do not have well equipped laboratories, workshops, and usable infrastructures. Where these exist, they are grossly inadequate, obsolete, and in dilapidated shape (Okolocha & Baba, 2016). Furthermore, Oduma (2007) posited that what is seen and referred to as vocational education laboratories in most institutions today are eye-sores as the laboratories only have equipment that were provided at the time the institutions and departments were established.

It is however a statement of fact that most departments offering Vocational Education in Nigeria still depends on engineering workshops and lecturers to teach vocational and technical courses. A research by Opeoluwa in Dokubo (2013) indicates that less than 40% of tertiary institutions in Nigeria have workshop and laboratory space for vocational education programs. Opeoluwa, concluded that this situation is partly responsible for the reason why it has been



increasingly difficult to run experiments effectively for students and thus making teaching and research in vocational and technology education difficult.

The state of TVET in Nigerian democracy is also clear in our secondary schools. According to Gusua (2008) in Lawal (2014), pre-vocational subjects meant to lurch Nigeria into a respectable industrialized state with abundant pool of lower manpower became a mirage. The teaching of pre-vocational subject ended up not having either workshop nor qualified teachers with TVET subjects theoretically taught like social studies. The hope that reforms in education will enable schools fabricate some of their basic needs such as chairs, desks beds, etc. never materialized. Priorities were misplaced, and huge resources squandered with virtually no results to show for it (Ajayi & Ayodele, 2002).

The effects of the poor state of TVET in Nigerian democracy are total and far reaching on every sector of the economy as seen in high rate of unemployment, armed robbery, human trafficking, boko haram insurgency, and bunkering, among others. This situation has subjected most Nigerian families to abject poverty, being deficient in relevant skills for self reliance. How far the successive democratic government in Nigeria has pursued the issue of vocation technical education and training for the manpower needs of the country visa-a-visa the unemployment situation affecting the Nigeria youths remains a big question yet to be answered.

Challenges Facing TVET in Nigeria: Implications for National Development

There seem to be consensus among scholars of VTE on the challenges facing TVET in Nigeria. Among the challenges as agreed by Okala (2004), Dike (2005), Oduma (2007), and Okeke & Eze (2010) are:

1. **Poor Public Perception and Apathy to Vocational Education:** The general attitude of the public towards technical and vocational education is found to be negative. The general public must be made to recognize that technical and vocational education is the backbone of development in any nation. An analysis by Yakubu according to Okala (2004) shows that less than 3% of the country's yearly total enrolments to tertiary institutions are for TVET programmes. Whereas, most countries seeking to have a rapid socio-economic development, target about 50 percent enrolment. This is an indication of poor image the Nigeria public hold for TVET.
2. **Government Lukewarm Attitudes/Poor Funding:** The three tiers of Government in Nigeria have not fully come to appreciate the contributions of vocational and technical education to both local and national economic life. Okeke & Eze (2010) stated that insufficient finance is a major factor inhibiting the implementation of vocational and technical education program in Nigeria.
3. **Underutilization of Trained Vocational Technical Teachers:** Many technical institutions across the country are inadequately staffed both qualitatively and



quantitatively. In most departments especially in vocational education programmes, the number of trained TVET teachers for each specialized area is in short supply. It is an indisputable fact that without trained TVET teachers, practical works which is an essential component of TVET programme will be difficult to implement. Okorie (2001) noted that acquisition of skills requires that strict attention and supervision should be given to every student. In other words, individualized instructions become very difficult during practical due to short supply of trained TVET teachers. Many people who are trained to teach TVET courses have always abandon teaching for other better jobs that have prestige and better remuneration.

4. **Lack of Adequate Equipment and Training Infrastructures**

Infrastructural development do not meet standard for developing education system. The situation on ground according to Oduma (2007) reflects poor classroom structures, libraries and laboratories. Workshop tools, machines and their consumables are not adequate for the standard targeted. Dokubo (2013) concluded that this situation is partly responsible for the reason why it has been increasingly difficult to run experiments effectively for students and thus making teaching and research in vocational and technical education difficult. The resultant effect is seen in unqualified and ill-prepared vocational education graduates in the society.

5. **Non-Uniformity of Course Contents:** Most of the Nigerian universities and colleges that offer vocational education programme do not have uniform course contents. Non uniformity in the course contents usually creates problems for students who may wish to transfer to another institution to complete their studies. This disparity in course contents of vocational education programme in Nigerian universities and colleges poses a great challenge for the standardization of the VTE programmes.

6. **Poor Learning Environment:** It is a statement of fact that no meaningful teaching and learning can take place in environment that is not conducive. For a better result, teaching and learning environment need to be conducive and well furnished. Okoro in Okolocha (2012) opined that effective vocational education can only be achieved where the training on the jobs are carried out, with the same tools and machines as exist in the industry itself. This means that vocational and technical education will be efficient and effective in proportion to the environment in which the learner is trained. To achieve this, a well-planned and organized environment is imperative for students to learn.



Strategies for Repackaging TVET in Nigeria

In view of the state of TVET and its accompanying challenges in Nigeria as discussed above, the following strategies are suggested for a successful repackaging of the programme to achieve its intended purpose.

1. Boosting the Image of Vocational and Technical Education: In this 21st century, the business environment is changing at a very fast pace with regard to the world of work. This demands new skills for proper adaptation to the business world. For Nigerians to meet the skill needs of the 21st century job market, they should have a rethink and change their negative mindset by embracing vocational skill acquisition for the improved socio-economic development of the country. The government should make TVET more attractive by awarding scholarships to its students, making it compulsory for each student to acquire at least one vocational/technical skill irrespective of the area of specialization. The government, TVET professionals and institutions offering TVET should use persuasive advertising both print and electronic media, workshops, conferences, seminars, churches and other local means to create awareness of what TVET is for, what it does, and its benefits in improving the political, social and economic status of individuals and the nation at large. Proper re-orientation will make the education stakeholders to begin to see the vocational and technical education with the seriousness that it requires. Students must be made to realize that certificates do not count again but the depth of knowledge and vocational skills which they have acquired and their ability to sustain the skill. Once there is improvement in the image of vocational training in Nigeria, young people will move into the programme because the quest for certificate has failed Nigerian youths and the nation at large.

2. Involvement of TVET Professionals in TVET Policy Decisions: One major problem confronting TVET is the use of non-professionals in handling TVET matters. Ibeneme (2007) noted that many administrators of TVET programme at policy making level are not vocationally trained persons and thus do not seem to understand the needs of the programme regarding fund distribution. For TVET to be successful, government must ensure that TVET professional are involved in TVET policy making decisions, planning and implementation. This is necessary because TVET professionals know the needs of the TVET programmes in terms of deploying human and material resources for effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The professionals, according to Manfred and Jennifer in Okolocha (2012), have all the necessary skills, abilities and capabilities for carrying out the programme.

3. Matching TVET Policies with Needs Assessment and Proper Planning: Government should conduct needs assessment of the people and the country at large with respect to TVET and match it with proper planning before implementation. Policies on education made in haste will never give desired results. It would be better according to Gusua (2008) in Lawal (2014), if policies are made in such a way that changes can be accommodated without disturbing the overall system.



Proper planning will also help to avoid inconsistencies in policy decisions which could hinder performance and success of TVET programmes. In line with this, Gove (2014) in Ayonimike, Okwelle, & Okeke (2015) stressed that if the youth of the country are to be prepared for the anticipated productivity in the world of work, there is need for a plausible plan to overhaul the education system in favour of TVET to enable the youths secure their future.

4. Enrich Laboratory/Workshop: Dramatic changes occasioned by globalization have shown that functional skill acquisition is truly capable of improving ones economic destiny rather than mere acquisition of certificates. To acquire the right skills needed for wider choice of jobs and career paths, well equipped laboratory and workshop becomes critical. Government should equip TVET workshops with modern equipment, tools and machines to enable teachers and students practice the skills using a replica of what should be obtained in the workplace and as well undertake socially relevant researches. Reprinting relevant books that are out of stock, encouraging new book projects and launching endowment funds for new libraries and book should also be undertaken by government. Nigerian institutions should not relent from seeking assistance from foreign donors, NGOs, philanthropists and industrialists. Students can acquire the right skills only when they are taught with the right tools, equipment and machines in a good environment.

5. Exchange Programmes within and outside the Country: Government and institutions should plan, negotiate and fund exchange programmes with other countries that are already neck deep in skill acquisition practices. This will definitely help to increase the graduates and teachers knowledge and technical know-how in the field of vocational and technical education. The involvement of government agencies in skill programmes such as ITF, SURE –P, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), and National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in the TVET programme will help, value and promote the image of TVET. Cooperation between institutions and industries will help to provide students with state-of-the-art equipment, machines and tools and also make the students to experience real life situations. There should be a planned interaction among institutions offering TVET programmes and the general public through institutional exhibitions. This will help institutions to know where they have comparative advantage over others in the area of skills acquired. It will also create awareness on what TVET institutions do and capabilities of the students. This will motivate parents and donors to assist institutions in the areas of funding and encourage parents to send in their wards to enroll for the TVET programme.

6. Staff Training: The training of academic staff should be a continuous exercise to ensure consistent improvement in the quality of TVET teachers. The training should be in two folds: training to acquire qualifications required for teaching and continued professional training. Both types of training can be acquired either locally or overseas. Government should adequately fund and support TVET programme through scholarships awards, funding/research grants, provide current books and journals in order to meet the needs required for good job performance.



7. Restoration of Craft Period in Primary and Post Primary Schools: Pupils and students should be encouraged to imbibe the culture of craftsmanship at a tender age. This will create a very conducive atmosphere for the sustainability of TVET in Nigeria. During the 1970s and 1980s for instance, primary schools pupils and secondary school students were encouraged through government policy to undertake handcraft and other skill acquisition tasks themselves as part of continuous assessment during prescribed periods of time. Today, handicrafts are not part of the school curriculum. Parents, especially the elite, rich and influential members of the society, do influence teachers and school management to accept finished (imported or locally) goods from their wards rather than making them learn how to acquire the skills and use same to produce goods. Most schools seem not to observe the craft period any longer. This attitude seems to demoralize the students who would have offered skill courses in higher institutions and even after graduation. There is an urgent need for government through various boards in charge of primary and secondary schools to reintroduce this in schools and ensure compliance.

8. Funding: Considering the economic forces reshaping the world today, getting education right should be given priority attention in this democratic dispensation. Government should endeavour to fund TVET and other skill acquisition programmes very well, bearing in mind the capital intensive nature of the programmes. A special fund to be tagged “Vocational and Technical Education Intervention Fund” should be created for the effective implementation of TVET programmes at all levels. This will help to equip the workshops and laboratories for effective skill acquisition.

9. TVET Program should be made Attractive: Oluwale, Jegede and Olamide (2013) stated that attracting qualified staff into teaching and teacher training in technical and vocational education is a problem for most countries including Nigeria. In order to spur locally needed vocational and technology teachers, it is imperative that Nigerian government should seriously consider proper retention schemes for their best talents by providing special working conditions such as; adequate research supports and other incentives to stem this problem of brain drain. Moreover, the alleged discrimination between HND, and B.sc holders in science, vocational and technological courses in terms of status, and salary should be looked into by the Federal Government as a matter of urgency.

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