

TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET): A VIABLE STRATEGY FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) faces enormous demands globally because of the abnormal state of joblessness and the quest for technological advancement, industrialization, and economic development. TVET has indisputable impacts on national development which is understood as associated with a range of socio-economic imperatives that include challenges of poverty and unemployment. Despite the abundance of natural resources, poverty remains prevalent in Nigeria. For TVET to achieve its objectives of enabling learners to catch up with the ever-changing living standard in a fast-growing technological world and creating jobs for sustainable living, it must be strengthened through global partnerships because no government can singlehandedly shoulder this enormous responsibility. It is with this understanding that this paper seeks to examine the need for global partnerships in TVET, roles of TVET in the global economy, the necessity for global partnerships in a national economy, the effects of youth unemployment on national development, and TVET as a viable strategy for poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The paper recommends that global partnerships should be encouraged. Sharing of ideas in terms of policies, strategies, curriculum, and implementation between global TVET institutions, industries, and stakeholders—aimed at ensuring that learners are abreast with developments in the world of work – should be implemented.

Keywords: *Alleviation, Education, Technical, Training, Vocational & Poverty.*

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is any education, training, and learning activity leading to the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, and skills that are relevant for employment or self-employment. TVET serves here as an overarching term to describe all kinds of formal, non-formal, and informal training and learning provided by different institutions at various learning locations. TVET is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work. In the past various terms have been used to describe elements of the field that are now conceived as comprising TVET. The Second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education held in Seoul in 1999 decided that the best, most comprehensive term to use is Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (Hollander & Mar, 2009).

TVET is known by many other names in different countries and regions. Among the names are Apprenticeship Training, Vocational Education, Technical Education, Technical-Vocational Education (TVE), occupational Education (OE), Vocational Education and Training (VET), Professional and Vocational Education (PVE), Career and Technical Education (CTE), Workforce Education (WE), and workplace Education (WE). Even though TVET is known by different names the focus is the same.

UNESCO, (2002) defined Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, acquisition of practical skills and attitudes, and understanding and knowledge related to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. TVET plays a significant role in providing a highly skilled workforce for the development of many countries. TVET is an instrument of social policy. It assists people in certain social groups such as those in poverty or who lack marketable skills (Basu, 1997) to improve themselves. In fact, TVET can alleviate the socio-economic status of those in poverty. TVET produces human resources that have both soft skills and technical skills, or the work skills required by the new economy. TVET is an indispensable instrument that helps improve the quality of the workforce by improving their mobility, adaptability, and productivity (Caillods, 1994). Thus, TVET can contribute to the enhancement of the competitiveness of any organization in the globalized world.

TVET is well placed to train a skilled and entrepreneurial workforce, required by some countries to create wealth, and emerge from poverty because TVET orients itself towards the world of work with a curriculum that emphasizes the acquisition of employable skills (Afeti, 2006). As TVET is very important in the development of a nation, it must be promoted at both secondary school level and post-secondary school level. TVET should be emphasized in the national human-capital development policy because TVET is the key to both economic growth and to providing individuals economic opportunities. The perception of second-class status presently accorded to TVET should be removed by taking steps such as having an articulation agreement with post-secondary institutions and giving due recognition to TVET qualifications. In view of these facts, TVET can therefore be seen as a viable strategy for poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Need for Global Partnership in TVET

Technical Vocational Education and Training face huge demands globally due to the high level of unemployment and the quest for technological development, industrialization, and economic growth. For TVET to achieve its objectives of enabling learners to catch up with the ever-changing living standard in a fast-growing technological world and creating jobs for sustainable living, it must be strengthened through global partnerships because governments cannot singlehandedly shoulder this enormous task. The unfortunate historical neglect of TVET is an obstacle to national and global development. Governments globally have sought to address the issue of unemployment. The number of unemployed graduates and youths in the labour market is alarming but more alarming and disturbing is the quality of these graduates. Unemployment has bedeviled the lives of people, causing untold hardship, suffering, dejection, and frustration among other outcomes. Adebayo (2013) believes that the high rate of unemployment among youths has contributed to high rates of poverty and social vices. The need for global partnerships in TVET is also justified by the fact that TVET institutions and their programmes are ineffective and of low quality. TVET faces a lot of challenges in Africa, the greatest of which Oviawe (2018) noted to be inadequate funding by governments. In addition, infrastructures in most schools, including higher education institutions, are dilapidated. Moreover, Oviawe (2018) further noted that there is an adverse learning condition characterized by a paucity of teaching and instructional materials, and the absence of adequate infrastructures in most TVET institutions.

Furthermore, Okeshola (2012) stated that the hygiene and sanitary conditions in most TVET institutions are also critical, and the lack of such infrastructures has been identified as a contributory factor to the poor retention and participation of girls in TVET. There are also the challenges of inadequate classroom blocks, lack of conducive staff offices, inadequate electricity supply, lack of water supply, inadequate workshop spaces, lack of TVET machines and tools, lack of TVET books, lack of consumable materials, and inadequate instructional materials as found by Ayonmike, *et al.*, (2015).

Research evidence indicates the following as challenges facing TVET:

- most formal TVET institutions are currently operating in an environment that is characterized by low-quality training and mismatch between training and labour market skill demand (Yusuf & Soyemi, 2012).
- the quality of TVET facilities like workshops, books, classrooms, learning environment, machines, computer rooms, TV/Audiovisual, instructors, and contents of curriculum is inadequate in most tertiary institutions (Akhuemonkhan *et al.*, 2013).
- inadequate classroom blocks, lack of conducive staff offices, inadequate electricity supply, lack of water supply, inadequate workshop spaces, lack of TVET machines and tools, lack of TVET books, lack of consumable materials, and inadequate instructional materials (Ayonmike *et al.*, 2015).

The obvious implication of these challenges is that the quality of training given to the learners is very low and they may end up not acquiring adequate skills required for getting and sustaining employment in the labour market or being self-reliant. In view of these issues global partnerships have become necessary for the following reasons:

- The widening infrastructure gap, increased demand for TVET,
- inadequate government funding,
- inadequate facilities and falling standard of education.

It is on these facts that Okoye and Chijioke (2013) opined that global partnerships are inevitable due to the growing economic and financial difficulties which have made it impossible for many governments to pay for the rather high cost of TVET.

Role of TVET in Global Economy

No economy can succeed without a highly skilled workforce that is able to respond with creativity to sudden economic changes, centered on developing and utilizing knowledge (Basu, 1997). The development of a knowledge-based economy coupled with emerging technologies and globalization have influenced future growth trends particularly in the worldwide demand for skills and expertise. Therefore, Mouzakitis (2010) believes that any nation that aims to compete in the world arena must have a workforce that can adapt and adjust to the changing demands arising from technological advances in the knowledge-based economy. Traditionally, vocational education has been identified with educational provision directed at occupational learning of types of work that are seen as requiring only lower-level skills, commonly 'manual' rather than intellectual skills, and which consequently may be taught, through focused 'training' rather than through a more expansive engagement in 'education' (Moodie, 2002).

However, with recent developments, the orientation of TVET has changed. TVET does not engage itself entirely with the preparation of the workforce for low-level jobs. Now TVET is recognized as one of the most important keys to sustainable development. In fact, TVET enhances human capital development for industrialization. It is through programs like TVET that a country can produce the highly skilled workers needed to propel economic growth. TVET has been getting attention from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, and many bilateral aid agencies since the year 2000, due to the important roles played by TVET in the development of a nation. According to Basu (1997), TVET helps develop the economy of a country by providing skilled workers for the labor market. In addition, TVET is an instrument of social policy. It assists people in particular social groups, such as those in poverty or who lack marketable skills, to improve themselves (Basu, 1997). To achieve all these aspirations, especially in a changing economy, a country needs a strong TVET system, and this has been shown to be true in some countries, as described by Segerstrom (1998). According to these authors, strong economies, such as Germany, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore all possess well-developed vocational and technical education (VTE) systems. Human resource development is an investment that cannot be taken lightly, otherwise, the country may not be able to compete in the globalized world. In fact, according to

Park (2009), human resource development through TVET is a cycle of investment in human resources to enhance productive capabilities.

The utilization of those resources to produce higher output, and the consumption by those human resources of the benefits arising from the increased output, leads to an enhanced quality of life. A good human resource development policy must emphasize the development of highly skilled workers, and this can only be done through a good TVET system. There is no doubt about the fact that the nature of occupations served by the vocational education sector has been evolving progressively in recent decades into one demanding more intellectual and higher-order skills commonly associated with traditional professions. The increase of business, communications, and service industries, and the evolution of economies into knowledge-based societies have contributed to the transformation of vocational education, especially in the more economically developed countries, into a sector more focused on education than on training (Hyland, 2002). With the changes occurring in the workplace and work environment, a well-educated and highly skilled workforce is needed to achieve success and prosperity. There is a need for highly skilled workers all over the world and through TVET individuals have the chance to acquire a combination of knowledge, practical and social skills, positive attitudes, and the ability to think creatively and responsibly as well as to act independently. This is achievable because Remington (2018) noted that TVET curriculum combines both theoretical (30%) and practical components (70%).

Necessity of Global Partnership in a National Economy

Globalization and the intensive use of information and communication technology have led to the emergence of a new economy (Boutin *et al.*, 2009). A division of economic and social affairs of the United Nations (2001) defines globalization as a flow, between countries of goods, services, capital, ideas, information, and people, which produces national cross-border integration of several economic, social, and cultural activities. The use of information communication technology (ICT) has made possible the internationalization of core economic activities such as the exportation of some goods and service sectors from one country to another where labor is cheap or business transactions without the merchant and customers being present at the same place. For example, the USA has outsourced many businesses in the areas of electronics and technology as well as pharmaceuticals to countries like India which has a large pool of skilled workers and as a result, both countries enjoy mutual benefits which in turn boost the economy of an individual nation.

Effects of Unemployment on National Development

Nigeria as a nation has experienced several forms of economic, political, and social unrest. In recent times, unemployment which is caused by individuals and government forces had joined the list of the social evils experienced in Nigeria today. The issue of unemployment has become a worldwide phenomenon demanding increased attention, though the impact is more

devastating in developing nations (Walterskirchen, 2003). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2012), Nigeria's rate of unemployment stood at 19.7%. In fact, Adebayo and Ogunrinola, (2006); George and Oseni (2012), and Ede *et al.* (2013), identified unemployment as one of the major challenges confronting Nigeria's economic development. The menace of unemployment in Nigeria both now and in the recent past has been an issue of great concern to economists, policymakers, economic managers, individuals, governments, and many others (Bello, 2003). Unemployment has been defined as a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment (Fajana, 2000). The same writer went further to say that the higher the rate of unemployment in an economy, the higher the level of poverty and associated welfare challenges. The effect of unemployment in Nigeria is very severe and threatening to the citizenry and the economy (Bello 2003). The following have been identified to be unemployment effects on the economy:

- a. **Unproductive labour force:** According to Njoku and Ihugba (2011), the most direct impact on the economy of an unproductive labour force is lost output in terms of goods and services. This results in no income tax being collected and reduced income from indirect taxes. Most youths who have the requisite skills in entrepreneurship, those coming from institutions of higher learning with wonderful results, have no place in the work environment of Nigeria. This ugly scenario has made the labour force unproductive.
- b. **Contributes to crime and violence:** With the growth of youth unemployment, the gap between the rich and the poor keeps growing, resulting in social tensions which could affect the entire community, state country.
- c. **Contributes to low GDP:** Njoku and Ihugba (2011) established that the economic size of the workforce directly impacts a country's GDP. Not only does the workforce produce manufactured goods or services or agricultural produce in direct proportion, but also brings in its wake increasing purchasing power. In turn, this fuels economic growth. Thus, unemployment contributes to a reduction in the potential which exists in spurring a country's GDP (Njoku and Ihugba, 2011).
- d. **Political instability:** When unemployment grows in a community, dissatisfaction with the incumbent Government follows. This in turn leads to frequent changes in governments or formations of unsteady coalitions.

TVET as a viable strategy for poverty alleviation in Nigeria

Given the high level of unemployment in Nigeria, the development of entrepreneurial skills and initiatives should be of paramount importance especially in the higher education sector to facilitate employability of graduates who will increasingly be called upon to be not only job seekers but above all to be job creators in Nigeria (Okebukola, 2001).

Nigeria is at its lowest ebb in human capital development and utilization in the view of Okezie (2020) because of its inadequate educational system which tends to produce more graduates

who lack job skills for employment than the economy requires to remain vibrant. Many people are living in poverty and face huge challenges in accessing the skills needed for healthy and productive lives. The development of skills through TVET is now one of the most often-cited priorities by ministers of education in both developing and developed countries (Tang, 2012). In view of this, there is a need to restructure the educational system.

According to UNESCO, (2013), “one of the main reasons for high youth unemployment across the world is a growing mismatch between supply and demand for skills, which disproportionately affects young people in developing countries”. Hence, TVET is widely recognized as a viable strategy for poverty alleviation in Nigeria. This is because TVET plays a significant role in providing a highly skilled workforce for the development of many countries.

TVET is an instrument of social policy. It assists people in certain social groups such as those in poverty or who lack marketable skills to improve themselves (Basu, 1997). In fact, TVET can alleviate the socio-economic status of those in poverty. TVET produces human resources that have both soft skills and technical skills, or the work skills required by the new economy. TVET is an indispensable instrument that helps improve the quality of the workforce by improving their mobility, adaptability, and productivity.

Conclusion

Technical and vocational education is an important component of the education system. It is undeniable that TVET plays a great role in the economic development of a nation. TVET helps students prepare for occupational fields through the acquisition of broad knowledge and generic skills applicable to a wide variety of occupations. TVET, through its orientation toward the world of work and the acquisition of skills, plays an essential role in promoting a country’s economic growth and poverty reduction thus ensuring the social and economic inclusion of marginalized communities. TVET helps learners acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to develop professional careers and enter the world of work as well as active citizenship and lifelong learning. The implementation of TVET should be the responsibility of not only the government but also the business and industry sectors.

Recommendation

Based on the facts from the literature evidence reviewed, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Global partnerships between the public, government, industries, and institutions in terms of sharing of ideas, policies, and strategies should be encouraged.
- ii. There should be synergy between global TVET institutions, industries, and stakeholders aimed at ensuring that learners are abreast of developments in the world of work.

- iii. TVET programme should be re-emphasized and promoted to attract more youths to enroll in these programmes.
- iv. Efforts should be made to ensure that TVET is not viewed as a second choice in education options.

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