TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

The Nigerian national policy on education has Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as one of its components which entails qualitative and vocational education that focuses on the development of skilled and independent technicians, craftsmen, and technologists through technological human resources development. This is aimed at addressing the challenges of lack of jobs and creation of new jobs by development of skills. With the continuous economic melt-down befalling most African countries TVET will be a better option to transform the economy through creation of skilled work force that will be self-reliant or self-employed and employing others. The write up adopted a qualitative meta-analysis systematic review approach to enumerate the numerous challenges in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) which include fluctuated government policies, outdated curriculum that do not address the needs of industries and the populace, Corruption among others. This paper therefore discuss the challenges facing TVET in Nigeria and numerous opportunities TVET can play to alleviate poverty through job creation for the countless unemployed youths in Nigeria. To drastically reduce the effect of economic melt-down on the Nigerian citizens, it is important for the government at all levels to increase funding of TVET.

Keywords: Economy, Employment, Nigeria, Poverty, TVET.

Introduction

Technical and vocational education is an all compassing word used to define educational process which includes, acquiring knowledge about technologies and sciences, practical skills and attitudes relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and human life. (FGN, 2004).

Technical education and Vocational education though sometimes used interchangeably are not the same. Vocational educations are programmes designed for skills acquisition at lower level of education. It focuses on specific vocations for entry into defined workplace. While Technical education is not vocation based, it is a learning method that trains people to be adequately equipped for higher occupation (Reko & Maxwell, 2016).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) education has evolved over the years and it is thought to be as old as the formal education because they go side by side (Uwaifo, 2009). Most developed world especially the British government used this medium to produce the needed human resources to develop countries under their colonization (Sang *et al*., 2012). To reiterate the importance of TVET, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa sponsored a conference which focuses on Human Resource Development and Training. It was recommended from the conference that governments at all levels must ensure that their populace receives post primary and tertiary training needed for economic growth (Emmanuel, 2014).

As Nigeria population increases (to reach about 262 million by 2030), with the majority being young and within the labour force age, hence there is prediction of looming extreme poverty soon. Therefor attention must be shifted to more sustainable wealth creating opportunities (IOM, 2014).

With the continuous increase in unemployment, over dependency on government, vast majority leaving below the poverty line and emergence of different crime groups (Boko Haram, Kidnappers, Banditry among others) in our society today. This write up therefore looks at the opportunities and challenges vocational and technical education faced in Nigeria. Recommendation from this paper will assist education planners, policy makers and other decisions makers in human resource training and development to make adequate plans and laws to reduce unemployment, poverty and an alternative source of economic growth in Nigeria.

TVET in some parts of the world

Agrawal (2013) asserts that there are several remarkable examples from industrialized nations that adhered to highly eminent policies and recommendations, making TVET a First-Class Model around the globe. These experiences can be used to identify potential opportunities and duplicated in Nigeria's TVET system (Abdelmoiz & Chen, 2019).
Singapore's TVET program aims to equip graduates with the fundamental standards and skills required by business and the economy. The graduate's employability, personal growth, opportunities for additional education and career development, public acceptability, and image are the primary benefits (Abdelmoiz & Chen, 2019). It had been thought of that ancient ways of commerce and trading will not deliver satisfactory jobs, this prompted Singaporeans to quickly adopt TVET for economic diversity and growth. The Singaporean strategic plan, which was put into action, was characterized by transitional stages that began in the 1960s and continued through the 2000s. These stages include a labor market-focused factor-driven economy, a capital investment-focused investment-driven economy, and a knowledge-related innovation-driven economy (Seng, 2012). With an emphasis on workforce-related knowledge, skills, and values, the fastest transformation from a third-class to a first-class economy within only 30–40 years is possible, this is the most intriguing lesson that can be learnt from Singapore's TVET system.

Tessaring and Wannan (2010) reported that TVET had a significant impact on boosting economic competitiveness and wealth creation in Finland. They were of the opinion that the targeted category in this system of learning are young people, i.e. upper secondary, depending on the level of education, polytechnic and university education typically lasts three to eight years. By 2020, the Finnish National Board of Education hopes to have this initiative completed (Hanhijoki et al., 2012). The lesson to be drawn from Finland's experience is its curriculum which includes a wide range of subjects being taught at high school in order to widen employment opportunities. It was developed and improved through long-term strive to improve synergy between the educational system and the workforce, this attracts and allow students to enroll in the higher education. (Abdelmoiz & Chen, 2019).

TVET Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, much emphasis has been placed on University Education, this phenomenon have reduced the economic opportunities of those who want to go into practice other than academics or office work (Ojimba, 2012). Most employers of labour today prefer skill than in the past (Yang, 2008). This is because of trade, organizational and technical development, and the deregulation of important industries as reported by (Oranu, 2010). Most higher institutions of learning in Nigeria have included vocational education in their course work but these vocation are still seen as inferior to classroom work thereby reducing student's interest and participation.
Many of the so-called "expatriate engineers" receiving large sums of money in dollars for building roads in Nigeria are graduates of vocational colleges, but the majority of our higher educational institutions in Nigeria lack the equipment and machinery needed to train students in order to acquire the skills required by labor employers. (Reko & Maxwell, 2016).

Some of the Challenges

- **Technical Education Drivers**

It is pertinent to know that despite having 123 polytechnics and numerous vocational centers in Nigeria, the country is still technologically backward, this implies that technical and vocational education has been greatly undermined (Otache, 2019). The Technical College in Kaduna became the Kaduna Polytechnic in 1968; the Technical College in Ibadan became the Polytechnic Ibadan in 1970; the Mid-Western College in Auchi became the Auchi Polytechnic in 1972; and the Technical College in Enugu became the Institut of Technology after the government recognized the importance of polytechnic education in the development of the nation (Awodi, 2019). The polytechnics in Nigeria have encountered diverse challenges which have negated the rationale behind their establishment (producing high quality technical manpower required for technological advancement and self-reliance of the country), these challenges include underfunding, infrastructure deficit, understaffing and the needless discrimination against the polytechnics and their products by the Nigerian government and the Nigerian society (Otache, 2019). He further stressed that a university requires a specific number of PhD holders and professors to run a programme or a faculty whereas in the polytechnics, a specific number of first degree and master's degree holders can run a programme successfully. It clearly shows how technical education has been undermined in Nigeria.

- **Political Instability**

Politics bothers on the processes and procedures including strategies applied to entrust power, authority and control of state machineries in resource allocation, law making and enforcement, and making decisions that affects the life of every member of the state. The system, processes and procedures of politics and political activities in a polity within a certain period of time is described as its political dispensation (Anthony, 2017)

The different political dispensation has failed to create an efficient and productive economy through its ability to mobilize or generate adequate resources to optimally finance technical and vocational education. Taylor (1992) noted the presupposition that the capacity of the political system to achieve these goals depends on the style or approach adopted in pursuing them. Continuous change in leadership of various Technical and vocational centers who shares different political views from the government at the center has created distortion in charisma and mode of administration of the centers thereby affecting the quality of outcome.

- **Inadequate funding**

Lack of finance for technical and vocational institutions has resulted in the graduation of graduates who are only halfway competent because there is not enough money to construct and maintain workshops, laboratories, or even buy contemporary equipment. Due to low financing, these centers typically have inadequate staffing (Reko and Maxwell, 2016), where available, they tend to leave quickly for other, more profitable positions, especially those abroad. As a result, untrained and unqualified technical teachers are hired, decreasing academic standards and wasting opportunities to advance technical education objectives (Ferej *et al*., 2012).

- **Training Facilities**

When they do exist, Nigeria's technical and vocational education facilities are typically in a terrible state with outdated laboratories and workshops (Ojimba, 2012). Only 40% of technical education institutions in Nigeria, according to Oryem Origa, (2005) have lab or workshop space for technical education programs. Due to the lack of laboratory and workshop space in the remaining 60%, our higher education institutions' technology programs are of poor quality. He also noted that there is a severe lack of lab supplies and equipment in the few schools that have them. This has caused technical school graduates in Nigeria to perform poorly because construction projects are increasingly managed by technicians and craftspeople from nearby West African nations (Nworlu – Elechi, 2013).

Curriculum inadequacy of TVET

The low pace of vocational and technological education growth in Nigeria can also be attributed to non-inclusion of science and technology in the curriculum of technical education. Where science and technology is included, they failed to address the peculiarity of our locality. Olunloyo (2002) reported that there is need to overhaul the curricula as they do not necessarily translate to the production of highly literate technical experts or ready-made graduates for the industry. The curricula are based on international models that have been developed under perfect circumstances (personnel, equipment, infrastructure, training opportunities, etc.) that are difficult to replicate in developing nations.

Possible Solutions

The necessary alternative economic driving force for our country is technical and vocational education and training. Without properly equipped technical and vocational institutions, Nigeria cannot advance as its development strategy is lacking in this area (Duke, 2009). As a result, the government must make significant investments in technical and vocational education.

Technical and vocational education should be rebranded in the society, as it has been in other developed societies, by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), vocational instructors, and all other interested parties (Ojimba, 2012).

Nigeria ought to now start putting policies into place that would reposition technical education for efficient competition in the burgeoning global economy. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), one method to increase the economic options for young people is to revitalize this industry (Reko and Maxwell, 2016).

The Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) and other labor unions could help promote the establishment of effective vocational training facilities in all local government areas where individuals may go to learn new skills or advance their current ones.

Recommendations

The Education Board and other ministries should initiate policies to compel institutions to add vocational and technical education to their curriculum irrespective of course of study.

To enhance their TVET systems for socioeconomic development, governments must support and promote the growth of industry at all scales (including small-scale industries).

The government should increase financing for technical and vocational education for the constantly expanding Youth population to lessen the burden of unemployment and poverty on young people.

Instructors or Teachers development and remuneration should be given priority and attention through regular training, periodic industrial training and visitation for teacher in other to keep them abreast with the technological changes in the industry.

Conclusion

All technicians and those who graduate from technical institutes should have sufficient financial support, either in the form of grants or collateral-free loans etc. for them to establish themselves and to employ others. The dichotomy between holders of technical certificates and others should be eradicated. They should be seen as complimentary rather than inferiority. This advocacy should be inculcated into our values system and education system from elementary schools. The three tiers of government and other non-governmental bodies must investment adequately in Vocational and Technical Education and Training.

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