REPOSITIONING TVET TOWARDS SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract

The paper aims at repositioning TVET in Nigeria towards self-employment and entrepreneurship. The greatest challenge facing Nigerian youths today is unemployment, and this is as a result of greater priority placed on general education at the expense of Technical and Vocational Education. The Nigerian government has formulated good policies on TVET. However, the successful implementation of these policies still remains a big challenge. TVET, if properly structured and re-positioned will obviously become a panacea to unemployment in Nigeria. This paper re-examines Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) critically and suggests various ways of repositioning it to solve the challenge of employment and poverty. The paper also highlights the roles of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in TVET implementation, the benefits of Technical and Vocational Education, and the challenges facing it.An attempt was made in the paper to proffer various recommendations that could ameliorate these challenges, reposition and standardize this level of education in Nigeria to meet societal demand.

Keywords: Technical and Vocational Education, Unemployment, poverty reduction, Entrepreneurship, Self-employment, TVET

Introduction

Among the committee of nations, Nigeria is noble for its numerous human and material resources. Unfortunately, these resources are neither optimally utilized nor maximized to harness massive economic potential. This problem has led to unemployment and poverty which are currently perceived as one of the most significant problems confronting economies and societies (Iwayemi, 2013). The reasons for this are not far-fetched: gross mismanagement, profligate spending, corrupt and adverse policies of various governments of Nigeria. Other effects of this problem are low standard of living, a decline in national output, high level dependence ratio, and abject misery (Osinubi, 2005).
Statistics have shown a surge in criminal activities, social vices, and political instability as a result of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria (Anyanwu and Oaikhenan, 1995). These myriads of problems hamper economic growth and promote unemployment.

Apart from the economic effects of unemployment, it also has social effects. According to Economic Watch (2010), the highest age group of unemployed Nigerians is the secondary school graduates, who fall between 35% and 50%. The age group between 20 and 24 years is 40%, and between 15 and 19 years, it is 31%
In another perspective, the unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 33.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 from13.55 percent in 2006, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics. Besides, it increased to 23.90 percent in 2011 from 21.10. Report also shows that the unemployment rate has been steadily increasing from 2006 – 2020, giving the lowest value of 5.10% in the fourth quarter of 2010 and highest value at 27.10%. In Nigeria, the employment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force (Trading Economies, 2022).

Tunji (2017), citing the National Bureau of Statistics in 2012 and the National Population Commission in 2013, reported that out of about 167 million people in Nigeria that are youth, no less than 11.1 million of them were jobless in 2012. The report further revealed that over 50% of all unemployed did not go beyond primary school education; 30 % of this population are secondary school leavers, while about 20 % are graduates of tertiary institutions of learning who have remained unemployed for five years after graduation (NISER, 2013).

In 2016, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that about 73 million youths were unemployed, and no less than 475 million new jobs need to be created over the next decade to accommodate these youths. It also proposes an average of 40 million new annual entrants into the labor market (UNESCO, 2016).

A major cause of Nigerian unemployment has been traced to over-emphasis on general education to the detriment of Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria since independence. In general education, Nigeria places greater effort in excessive book work, coupled with several certificates at the expense of skills and vocational development. However, in recent times, the Nigerian government and the private sector have shown greater interest in technical and vocational skills development because of the realization that the acquisition of technical and vocational skills will likely reduce poverty and sustain economic growth (Murgor, 2013).

Despite lots of efforts made by successive governments in Nigeria to formulate viable policies and reduce unemployment, only little success has been recorded. Hence, there is the need to reposition TVET towards self-employment and entrepreneurship, justifying this paper.

According to Chukumerije (2011), Technical and Vocational Education remains the only imperative for economic development in Nigeria. In his submission, several interventions and policies have been made towards economic development but all to no avail. However, reasons for this failure are due to some factors like shortage of experienced and practically oriented academic staff to train students to the meet the contemporary needs of industry and employers, inadequate infrastructure and facilities, wide disconnection between institutions and industry, absence of a national qualifications framework and inadequate regulatory and monitoring activities, weak support by industries to institutions' programmes and inadequate budgetary provision for TVET, to mention just a few. Some of the suggested measures to tackle this problem include the re-definition of the status of occupational training, basic and secondary education, restructuring of tertiary education, and the need for improved budgetary allocation to the TVET in Nigeria (Olabode, et. al. 2010).

The shortage of academic manpower in the Nigerian polytechnics has been on the increase for many decades. According to the Federal Office of Statistics, as students' enrolment increases, the teacher-student ratio also increases. The table below shows the trend in student enrolment and Teaching Staff between 1993 and 2000. The table reveals that the annual average percentage growth of 10.75 for student enrolment is higher than that of teaching staff, which is 7.3%. Osahon (1997) describes this scenario as an academic mismatch. Some researchers have recommended a solution to this trend. According to Adeyemi and Uko-Aviomoh (2004), the government should provide an academic manpower development policy towards effective technological delivery in the Nigerian Polytechnics.

Table 1: Trend in students' enrolment and Teaching staff in Nigerian Polytechnics: 1993 – 2000

Year	Enrolment	% Growth	Teaching Staff	% Growth	Overall Teacher Student Ratio
1993/94	124,000	-	4,960	-	1:25
1994/95	151,247	21.9	5,258	6.0	1:29
1995/96	150,391	-0.7	5,371	2.2	1:28
1996/97	178,456	18.7	607	13.7	1:29
1997/98	192,699	8.1	6,483	6.1	1:30
1998/99	216,159	12.0	6,755	4.2	1:32
1999/2000	233,612	8.0	7,536	11.6	1:31
Average		10.75		7.3	

Sources: 1.Federal Office of Statistics (1995, 1999, 2000)Annual Abstract of Statistics, Abuja, FOS. 2. National Board for Technical Education (1999) Digest of Statistics, Kaduna, NBTE. 3. Yahubu N. A. (2000) "Identification and Assessment of resource Requirements in Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria. A Seminar paper.4. Adeyemi, J. K. &Uko – Aviomoh, E. E. (20004). Effective Technological Delivery in Nigerian Polytechnic.Need for Academic Manpower Development Policy.

Furthermore, another problem militating against TVET in Nigeria is the unsuitable curriculum, which is more of theoretical work than practical and industrial based. According to Moemeka (2013), innovation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) occupies an important place in the ability of nations to meet the domestic needs of citizens as positing products in the global marketplace. He recommended innovations in the curriculum of technical and vocational institutions by integrating entrepreneurship education programme.

Nwachukwu (2012) reported the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), stating that the unemployment rate in Nigeria has been consistently rising. According to him, 2009, 2010 and 2011 witnessed 19.7%, 21.1% and 23% respectively.

This problem has been a big concern to several economic watchers, who after analyzing the problem discovered that there is an increasing trend of disinterest by the emerging younger generation in highly labour–intensive works such as agriculture and factory work in preference for white-collar jobs, resulting in many preferring to remain in the labour market rather than taking up such jobs. This is supported by Oloidi (2013) in his submission that over the years, Nigeria had been promoting theories, principles and concepts instead of the practice of Technology, making it to be rated very low in the area of Production and Industrialization.

It is obvious that Nigeria is characterized by a high level of unemployment, and research has confirmed that this ugly situation can be corrected by repositioning TVET.

2 The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)

An important body in the Federal Ministry of Education that was established by Act No 9 of 11th January, 1977 and vested with the responsibility of coordinating all aspects of TVE falling outside University Education is the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

The vision of the board is to promote quality TVET for sustainable development, growth, and leadership roles of Nigeria in African and global affairs. Its mission statement is to promote the production of skilled/semi-skilled technical and professional manpower, revitalize, and sustain the national economy, reduce unemployment and poverty through the setting of appropriate quality assurance instruments for TVET, provision of current and reliable information for planning and decision making, sourcing and disbursing of funds and establishment of adequate linkages between TVE institutions and industries.

The board performs several functions, among which are:

i. Providing standardized minimum guide curricula for TVET

ii. Supervising and regulating through an accreditation process, the programmes offered by technical institutions at the secondary and post-secondary level

iii. Funding of polytechnics owned by the Government of the Federation of Nigeria

Despite the functions, vision, and mission statement of the board, several researchers have argued that its performance or output is far below expectations. The poor rating has been discovered to be as a result of poor funding, shortage of qualified manpower, the instability in National Educational Policies, to mention a few.

3 Overview of Technical and Vocational Education

The concept of technical education is often wrongly used in Nigeria by referring to secondary vocational education and pre-vocational education programmes.

Technical and Vocational Education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life (FRN, 2004; p. 29).

Technical education is also a type of education designed to meet industrial needs. According to Giachine and Gallington (1977), technical education is a comparative need phase of vocational education defined to meet the complex technological needs of modern industry. This type of education is considered to be of post high school level and is intended to produce a classification of workers referred to as technicians.

On the other hand, vocational education is an organized educational programme which is directly related to the preparation of an individual for paid or unpaid employment or for additional preparation for a career requiring other than a bachelor's or advanced degree (Calhoun and Finch, 1982).

From the definitions stated above, it appears that Vocational and Technical Education are inseparable because both education impart relevant practical skills to learners. Many people erroneously perceive skill-based education programmes as a fallback plan for academic failures. This is among the reasons why vocational education tends to have a bad reputation for academic challenge and legitimacy than technical education (Marfo, 2017).

While educators hardly find a significant difference between technical and vocational education, Nigerian society has been deceived into believing that vocational education is intended for those who are unfit intellectually to pursue technical academic programmes.

According to the 2014 revised edition of the National Policy on Education, Technical and Vocational Education is a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

National Policy on Education (2014, p.43) also states that Technical and Vocational Education refers to:

a) An integral part of general education;

b) A means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;

c) An aspect of lifelong learning and preparation for responsible citizenship;

d) An instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development;

e) A method of alleviating poverty

Technical and Vocational Education has been perceived as an aspect of the Nigerian educational system that provides room for vocational training, skill acquisition, and adequate scientific competence (Nwosu and Micah, 2017).
Okorocha (2012) submitted that Technical and Vocational Education is an educational training that imparts practical skills, competencies, knowledge, structural activities, abilities, capacities, and rich experiences for employment, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance.

From the various definitions highlighted above, it could be seen that technical and vocational education is intended to boost the development of human resources, economy, and productivity.

4 Benefits of Technical and Vocational Education

The benefits of Technical and Vocational Education are too numerous to highlight. However, few will be discussed in this paper.

Technical and Vocational Education equips the trainees with practical and relevant skills that make them job creators rather than job seekers. This has a high likelihood of reducing poverty. According to Murgor (2013), a country with better developed technical and vocational skills among the youths has a higher likelihood of reducing poverty.

Technical and Vocational Education also helps Nigerians to start concentrating on areas that impart employable skills rather than mere certificate acquisition. This is in line with the submission of Okolocha & Baba (2016) that technical and vocational education encourage the shifting away from general education that encourages mere acquisition of certificates to skill-based education, which centers more on what one can do and the ability to apply the requisite skill in real work environment. According to the researchers, the state of joblessness among Nigerian youths has necessitated the clamor for TVE.

Furthermore, this type of education encourages youths that lack the resources, skills, or motivation to continue with higher education (Eichhorst, et al. 2012).

5 TVET- A Pathway to Poverty and Unemployment Eradication in Nigeria

Previous sections of this paper have established the fact that unemployment is highly predominant in Nigeria, and TVET is the only type of education that tends toward skill acquisition and entrepreneurship.

A major setback of TVET is the lack of appropriate machinery to ensure skill acquisition from the trainees and students, as well as poor quality skill disposal by the lecturers or teachers. There is a need for training and re-training of teachers as no one can give out what he or she does not possess.

To reposition TVET towards self-employment and entrepreneurship, good remuneration and motivating incentives should be provided to the trainers and lecturers/teachers. This will obviously serve as encouragement.

To alleviate unemployment, especially among Nigerian youths, the curriculum is another factor that needs to be looked into. It should be geared toward technical and vocational training. Nigeria should borrow a leaf from developed countries of the world. For instance, in Asia, the education system practiced is such that TVET is introduced right from primary four down to secondary and tertiary institutions
There is a need for an overhauling of the Nigerian educational system. For instance, universities that are conventional should only concentrate on research and science, among others. The specialized universities like University of

Technology or University of Agriculture should focus on skill acquisition and entrepreneurship (industrialization). However, this is not the case as at the time of writing this paper.

Training and re-training of trainers abroad is of paramount importance to enable them impart quality and up-to-date skills to the trainees. All these factors should be looked into if the nation is set to reposition TVET towards self-employment and entrepreneurship. Within a short time, Nigeria can witness a total transformation into a manufacturing nation through TVET.

6 The Challenges to TVET in Nigeria

Researchers have scored TVET very low because it has not performed up to expectations. The reasons for this poor performance is not far-fetched: a wide disconnection between institutions and industries, faulty policy and institutional frameworks, industrial dispute leading to incessant long closure of institutions, irrelevant and obsolete curricula, policy somersaults arising from the instability of political environment, inadequate regulatory and monitoring activities, lack of political view will be compounded by the hemorrhage of rampant, corruption, scientification of tertiary education, dichotomy between Polytechnic and University education, production of unemployable graduates, unqualified academic staff, lack of adequate staff training, poor funding, absence of a National Qualification framework and a host of others.

What makes the situation worse is the poor leadership attitude and their low priority on Education. UNESCO recommended 26% of a nation's national budget to education. However, this was not fully implemented in Nigeria.

Table 2: Budgetary allocation of 20 selected countries in 2012

S/N	Countries	% of Budget to education	Position
1	Ghana	31.0	1st
2	Cote d'ivoire	30.0	2nd
3	Uganda	27.0	3rd
4	Morrocco	27.0	4th
5	South Africa	25.8	5th
6	Swaziland	24.6	6th
7	Mexico	24.3	7th
8	Kenya	23.0	8th
9	UAE	22.5	9th
10	Bostwana	19.0	10th
11	Iran	17.7	11th
12	USA	17.1	12th
13	Tunisia	17.0	13th
14	Lesotho	17.0	14th
15	Burkinafaso	16.8	15th
16	Norway	16.2	16th
17	Columbia	15.6	17th
18	Nicaragua	15.0	18th
19	India	12.7	19th
20	Nigeria	8.4	20th

Source: Afe (2014)

The table above clearly shows Nigeria's low appreciation of education, as it devoted relatively less to education than other African countries, which are poorer than it.

From the table shown above, Nigeria budgeted a very meager amount for education among twenty selected countries in Africa. This implies that Technical and Vocational Education is given a very low priority. Several researches have indicated that government at various levels have not made adequate fund available for the implementation of TVET in Nigeria. According to Ayeni (2005), the underfunding of vocational and technical education in Nigeria has resulted in the production of half-baked graduates of technical institutions armed with certificates, but virtually no skills.

Table 3: Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education (2010-2019)

Year	Budget (₦Trillion)	Educational Allocation (₦ Billion)	Percentage of Budget (%)
2010	5.160	249.09	4.83
2011	4.972	306.30	6.16
2012	4.877	400.15	8.20
2013	4.987	426.53	8.55
2014	4.962	493.00	9.94
2015	5.068	392.20	7.74
2016	6.061	369.60	6.10
2017	7.444	550.00	7.38
2018	8.612	605.80	7.03
*2019	8.830	620.50	7.03
Total	**60.973**	**4413.17**	**7.24**

Source: Ndujihe (2018) - Vanguard Newspaper

*Ameh and Aluko (2019) – Punch Newspaper

Table 3 is also proof of Nigeria's poor devotion to education which is underfunded. The analysis of a decade's funding of education reveals that N60.973 trillion was budgeted between 2010 and 2019, out of which N4413.17 billion was spent on education, representing 7.24% of the total budget allocation. This is far from UNESCO's recommendation on educational funding.

TVET is also facing the problem of poor reward for lecturers and teachers, a situation that usually generates into industrial action and disruption of the academic calendar. The shortage of qualified, skilled and motivated teachers, inadequate motivation and attractive conditions of service, and failure to recruit qualified personnel to handle the subjects will have adverse effects on the graduates since they will lack the knowledge, skills, values, and will be unable to make meaningful contributions required for the technological and industrial development of Nigeria (Anakobe, 2002).

One thing is to formulate policies, and another thing is their implementation. Nigeria is currently facing the challenge of poor implementation or lack of adequate preparation for its take-off and review, among others, some of which were lacking in the National Policy on Education (Akanbi and Abiolu 2018). Some of these policies are: modification of structure of tertiary education, systematic learning assessment, diversification of curricula, and learner-centered pedagogy (FRN, 2011: 16-17).

As long as this problem persists, it will be extremely difficult to measure the progress of what is not implemented, resulting in the non-functionality of graduated students in spite of being certified. One upside of Nigerian TVET is the robust policy. However, implementing them is a constrain (Kadiri, 2010).

The issue of curriculum still remains a big problem for TVET in Nigeria. TVET curriculum fails to meet up with the current societal demands. According to Ayeni (2005), TVET tends to produce more of those who lack job skills for employment than those the economy requires to remain vibrant. Unfortunately, TVET curriculum fails to address technical skills for entrepreneurship. Essentially, what is seen today is a situation in which students are provided with more in-depth knowledge of the theory of the profession. An in-depth look into the curriculum shows that the curriculum of a subject with practical content is generally organized into an average of 67% for the theoretical classes and 33% for the laboratory.

More researchers have called for the re-designing of TVET curriculum to meet societal needs. According to Obanya (2002), the time has come to address the issue of re-designing TVETS programmes in Nigeria to meet our commitments in creating workshop instructional stimulations that are relevant to the practice of industrial and commercial activities for viable business engagement.

Another issue of concern is infrastructural facilities. Poor teaching aids, inadequate workshops, laboratories, and classrooms in many technical colleges and secondary schools, and the absence of basic tools, equipment, and materials for training are constraints for TVET to thrive (Yakubu, 2002).

In addition, lack of functional tools and equipment in schools and training centres, gross inadequacy of available machines, lack of textbooks and writing materials, more attention on theoretical than practical are still persistent problems facing TVET in Nigeria as trainees graduate, certified, but unfit for the jobs they were trained for.

Other problems confronting TVET are public apathy, whereby society looks down on technicians and skilled craftsmen while university graduates are given more respect and recognition (Irmarhiagbe, 2005).

7 Recommendations

To reposition TVET towards self-employment and entrepreneurship, the following recommendations are proffered:

i. There is a need for an overhauling of the educational reform in Nigeria. Ideas from other developing countries that are now thriving in industrialization can be adopted.

ii. The curriculum should be re-visited and re-designed to meet the current challenges in the areas of production, technology, and industrialization.

iii. Training and re-training of teachers, trainers and instructors (both local and international training) should be given priority.

iv. Government can collaborate with the private sector to organize exchange programmes with foreign institutions that are ahead of Nigeria in skill acquisition.

v. Provision of more and functional infrastructural facilities in laboratories and workshops as well as campuses should be given urgent attention.

vi. Government should end the dichotomy between the certificates obtained in the Polytechnic and the University.

vii. There is a need to restructure the regulatory body (NBTE) of TVE in Nigeria to ensure efficiency and effectiveness

viii. Finally, the government, private sector, and philanthropists should collaborate and fund Technical Education in Nigeria.

8 Conclusion

This paper has successfully shed an insight into technical and vocational education in Nigeria, its benefits, challenges encountered, ways of overcoming them, and how to reposition it towards self-employment and entrepreneurship to meet global standards. Nigeria will become a nation to be reckoned with in terms of technological advancement and industrialization and be given its rightful place among the committee of nations if all these recommendations made to standardize TVET are fully implemented.

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