

Challenges and Prospect of Vocational Technical Education and Training in Tertiary Institution in South-South, Nigeria

by

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Abstract

Technical Vocational education and Training (TVET) offers the training of technical skilled personnel for the purposes of initiating, facilitating and implementing the technological development of a people or Nation. It also creates the basic awareness of technological literacy to youths and women. In South-South Nigeria, the training of youths and women has witnessed formidable challenges ranging from poor funding to inadequate facilities, non-availability of adequate manpower, poor staff training and retention profiles, poor facilities, non-keeping Pace with technological advancement, defective curricula, poorly equipped laboratories, poorly monitoring standards, wrong mind-set about TVET etc. This paper intends to examine the progress made in TVET education despite the numerous challenges and suggest that government should give more attention to TVET programmes, increase funding of TVET sector and the fund should be directed toward research and development, acquisition of appropriate and up-to-date equipment and tools, general maintenance and management of TVET institutions.

Introduction

Technical vocational education and training (TVET) is an integrated part of national development strategies in many counties because of its impact on productivity and economic growth. A nation cannot develop without a well-equipped technical and vocational institutions or centers for the training of youths and women on practical skills that will yield development in such a nation. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is thought to be pivotal to achieving national development goals in Nigeria. However, the country is plagued by persistent challenges of youth unemployment, inadequate skills in relation to requirements in the world of work as well as the vulnerability of youths to sponsors of violent extremism due to unemployment-triggered poverty (Adekunle, 2017).

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is education and training which provide knowledge and skills for employment. Technical and Vocational

Education and Training (TVET) is that aspect of education that exposes the learner to acquisition of demonstrable skills that could be transformed into economic benefits (Akerele, 2007). TVET uses formal, non-formal and informal learning. It is recognized to be crucial vehicle for social equity, inclusive and sustainable development. TVET is also that “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 occupants in various sectors of economic and social life United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and International Labour Organization (UNESCO and ILO, 2002). TVET have being neglected in the Southern Nigeria for so long due to the focus on the natural resources of the area (oil and gas) despite the number of Government Technical schools and private skill training centers in the region, most of the oil and gas companies operating in the region lack skilled personnel, which can be address through technical and vocational education and training

(TVET). The persistent problem of unemployment has also been linked to inadequate provision of requisite skills training and knowledge acquisition to students who later ended up unemployed due to lack of adequate employable skills.

Most people in South - South also wrongfully categorized Technical Vocation Education and Training as one that cannot put food on their table, sees those who practice their skills as school drop outs, due to this mind set they don't take any opportunity they have to be trained in vocational courses seriously. The people of South- South Nigeria especially youths and women need to be re-orient on their wrong understanding and mindset on TVET, this can be done by educating them on what TVET is all about. Technical vocational education and training is based on preparing learners for career, based on manual and practical activities, training and education that relate to specific trade in which the learner participate and directly develop the society in particular group of techniques. TVET is aim at producing semi-skilled and technical manpower necessary to restore, revitalize, energize, operate and sustain the national economy and substantially reduce unemployment (Wodi, 2012). In support, Ayonmike (2012) posited that TVET can play an active role in addressing the skills shortages in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria.

Challenges of Technical Vocational Education and Training

TVET is faced with many challenges. Some of the challenges include: Community and industries as significant players in TVET, orienting TVET for social purposes, funding, facilities, curriculum of technical vocational education and training, keeping pace with technological advancement, training and retaining of staff,

- **Community and Industries as Significant Players in TVET:** This is one of the major obstacles to the social status of TVET, communities, professionals and industrial leaders has

failed to engage or train youths/women in TVET courses which will lead to high performance and productivity in the industries, enhance wages and more job opportunities. It has also been the mindset of parents, community leaders and industries that vocational education and training is a second choice to academic education. Most parents want to see their children becoming engineers, doctors, lawyers etc, just because they believe that this will give their children better job opportunities for this reason; they do not encourage them to be trained in TVET courses. (Allen, 2012)

- **Orienting TVET for Social Purposes:**

TVET system in South-South Nigeria is not demand driven. Attachment and linkage to industries are fragile, poorly planned and inadequately supervised. TVET sector in South-South is characterized by outdated curriculum, a mismatch between skills taught and those demanded by the industries, inadequate quality assurance mechanism, inadequate physical and learning resources and participation of private sector necessary to bridge the gap of school work. In order to ensure a TVET system that is demand driven, it will be necessary to create a system that is flexible and have a high rate of participation of all concerned parties. This is necessary since the demand for skills is difficult to predict as technology develops at an ever increasing rate and some skill accordingly becomes obsolete and others in more demand. Parents who can afford university education rarely send their children to a vocational school. Parents and students predominantly prefer general education because of the negative public perceptions on the status of blue-collar jobs (Adekunle, 2017).

- **Funding:**

Universities, Technical colleges and polytechnics in Nigeria are owned by the Federal and State governments and Private individuals. Over the years, funding these educational institutions by the government has not been adequate. The funding of technical education programme and training in South-South has not been impressive as this is a

reflection of negligent of the government towards the vocational education which is also responsible for the gradual irrelevant of this programme from the various educational institutions in the South-South region. This is also responsible for the gradual extinction of this programme from the various educational institutions in this country (Uwaifo, 2010). The management of most Tertiary Institutions also find it difficult to sponsor TVET lecturers to relevant seminars, conferences, short courses and training due to lack of fund. Low funding also affect the purchase of new equipment and repair of old equipment that is bad or spoilt.

- **Facilities:**

Most technical education departments in Nigerian Universities do not have laboratories, usable equipment and facilities, this makes the TVET teachers to take the students to places that have laboratory and usable equipment outside the department or embark on executions. In some of the technical colleges, polytechnics etc where the facilities exist, are grossly inadequate and the laboratories only have the items or equipment that were provided when the departments were established. The available facilities for TVET trainings and programme as at today are inadequate and besides they are obsolete. Oryem-Origa (2005) indicated that only 40% of Institutions of Higher Education in Nigeria have laboratory or workshop space for technical practical. The others, 60% do not have laboratory or workshop space and that this reflects in the low quality of technology programmes in higher institutions. According to Okebukola and Okolocha (2012), other challenges of TVET are: Teachers' inadequacies, Gross inadequacy in facilities, Harsh and Intimidating Classwork, Poor quality preparation of lesson by TVET Teachers, Resource inadequacy among others. The inadequate facilities and equipment makes it impossible for students to gain knowledge and skills in the most basic practical application of their course of study.

- **Curriculum of Technical Vocational Education and Training.**

It is of importance to overhaul the curricular used in Nigerian technical education due to the curriculum of a subject with practical content in our technical colleges are generally organized into an average of 67% for the theoretical classes and 33% for laboratory (Uwaifo, 2010). Other problems associated with the current curricula are: i) They are based on a foreign model which has evolved under ideal conditions (staff, equipment, infrastructure, training opportunities, etc) that are not easily duplicated in developing countries. ii) There is usually a shortage of highly competent indigenous teaching and support of staff with sufficiently wide practical experience of technology iii) There are basically lack of textbooks in this area and most of the available textbooks are often illustrated with examples from outside the local environment and which are irrelevant to the particular country. iv. The curricula are adjudged to be too academic, overloaded with intellectual content in pure science and mathematics at the expense of basic engineering and technology (Uwaifo, 2010). Another challenge is the rapid technological ITC growth that is hard to keep up with, which results in irrelevance of the curricula taught in today's TVET programmes or trainings. Apart from this, exclusion of technical and vocational education from the main stream curriculum, lack of guidance services among others are constraints to effective TVET delivery in Nigeria (World Bank, 2000).

- **Keeping Pace with Technological Advancement:**

The establishment of technological infrastructures, upgrading existing materials and training recourses available in TVET sector is very poor. The infrastructure and tools are to be upgraded according to the trend of the 21st century. There is no systematic development of the TVET teachers to level of the new technologies due to this, the teachers or lecturer are posed with problems on how to manipulate new tools and machines and not able to

understand and cope with the digital generation (Allen, 2012)

- **Training and Retaining of Staff.**

The training of academic staff is ordinarily a continuous exercise to ensure consistent improvement in the quality of their outputs. Training to acquire minimum qualification to teach and continued professional training is important. However, over time it has always been difficult for government or companies to get the trainees retained in the ministries or areas where their skills will be relevant; due to this those who had opportunity to be trained outside the country don't back to their respective countries after the completion of their study. In the 70s the Nigerian universities were able to recruit foreigners and retain them and the indigenous academic staff because of the low exchange rate. The high exchange rate provides good attraction to move out for self-fulfillment in terms of output and the robust economy of these countries is also part of the driving force.

The salary and service benefits paid to technical education teachers in Nigerian is about the lowest in the world and because of this, the skilled personnel (technologists) in some of the tertiary institutions migrate to other countries especially the United States of America (Uwaifo, 2010). UNESCO (2012) reported that Nigerian TVET is faced with many challenges. The image of TVET as education of the last resort despite the efforts of the government to change it still prevails. Another issue is the lack of efficient educational monitoring and evaluation procedures. Poor funding is also a great challenge preventing TVET system from coherent development. Teachers in Nigerian TVET are underestimated and there is a great lack of incentives provided for them.

Prospects of TVET in South-South Nigeria:

The awareness of TVET education in South-South has created a noticeable interest among the youth and women in the region and Government have also made some progress in many areas such as changing the mind-set of the

people, awareness of TVET regulatory agencies, integration of TVET programmes in institutions, opportunity for out of school children effort toward funding TVET sectors etc.

- **Change of Mind-Set:** Presently, Nigeria is going through economical tough times, getting white collar jobs has become difficult for graduates. This has necessitated to a notable change of mind-set toward Technical vocational Education and training programmes. A significant number of graduates in the field of engineering, law, medicine etc have yielded to be trained or pick up roles in catering skills, carpentry, shoemaking (cobblers), fashion designs, cosmetology and other vocations which put food on their table daily. (Allen 2012). There is also a general awareness among people for job oriented courses and ever increasing young learners are looking for new career paths in demand driven vocational education courses rather than pursuing degree courses which do not prepare them for a job in the world of work.

- **Awareness of TVET Regulatory Agencies:** Significantly, youths and women in South-South are now aware of agencies that regulate vocational education, this has enabled them to be satisfied in their choice of technical field or trade, such that their skill and proficiency can be ascertained and guaranteed. Government on the other hand has come to the realization that encouraging vocational and technical education is a sure and sustainable way to pull citizens out of poverty, which is the dividend of democracy. This has made government to use agencies like Bank of Agriculture, Bank of industry, NABTEB, and other small and medium scale funds to develop entrepreneurial skills which many youths and women has benefited in South-South Nigeria (Akinyele and bolarinwa, 2018)

- **Integration of TVET Programmes in the Institution:** Government have also integrated vocational Education or training using the NYSC camps nationwide to train graduates on different vocational skills like millinery (Hat making), catering skills, fashion designs, Tie and dye skills etc. The JUPEB and other special practical programme in some

Universities is a source to train youths on TVET courses. The challenge of the out of school children an opportunity for the repositioning of TVET programme in Nigeria to productively engage the active young population and curb the trend of their vulnerability to anti-social agents. In view of the global focus on using TVET as a tool for developing skills for the world of work, the current TVET structure in the country need to be equipped to make it more inclusive, accessible, and attractive to the young school leavers for skills and knowledge acquisition in preparation for decent work and living. (Adekunle, 2017).

• **Opportunity for Out of School Children:** Education for All (EFA) programmes have concentrated exclusively on Universal Primary Education and literacy. However, the need to complement the EFA with vocational skills training programmes to reach and empower marginalized groups is of equal importance as the society pays higher costs as children who fail in school find their opportunities limited in their lives after school with costs to both the individual and their society (Hughes, 2005). The establishment of more TVET institutions in our rural areas and the emphasis at providing vocational skills to develop and meet the needs of the communities in order to reduce income differences has increased a little. Thus youths and women with vocational skills will not have the urge to migrate to overpopulated cities for good jobs.

• **Efforts Toward Funding TVET Sector:** There is a step by the government toward funding of institutions, this is done through TETfund, though not too much but it has gone a long way to provide practical laboratories and workshop spaces, in some TVET departments.

Conclusion

In spite of the challenges and limitations put afore, the significance of TVET to the development and industrialization of an economy cannot be overemphasized. Technical Vocational Education and Training is a crucial platform for acquisition of skills and knowledge for employment and sustainable livelihood. It provides the needed employable knowledge,

skills and attitude necessary for effective performance in workplace as employees, employers and entrepreneurs. Government at all levels and individuals must take Technical Vocational Education and Training seriously in order to crate prosperous, economically and viable South-South Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Equal or more attention should be given to TVET sector in the South-South Nigeria as that offered to the general (academics) education.
2. The graduates in south-south should use every opportunity they have either by government or companies to learn any of the TVET skills and not waiting for white collar job that may not come as soon as they graduate.
3. The youths and women in South-South need to be inventive and innovative to develop the region without relying completely on natural resource (oil and gas) available in the area.
4. Government should increase funding of TVET sector; the fund should be directed toward research and development, acquisition of appropriate and up-to-date equipment and tools, general maintenance and management of TVET institutions.

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