

REIMAGINING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) IN NIGERIA: TOWARDS AN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Philosophy, traditionally regarded as the mother of all knowledge and the queen of the sciences, provides the foundational and critical framework for every discipline, including education and its vocational dimensions. African philosophy in the same vein is disciplinary movement embedded within the love of African wisdom. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is frequently approached from policy and economic perspectives; however, its philosophical foundations remain underexplored within African contexts. This paper argues that TVET is inherently philosophical because it presupposes particular understanding of knowledge, appreciation of human nature, grasp of work and disposition towards community. Drawing from classical philosophy of education, UNESCO's global TVET frameworks, and African philosophical traditions, particularly communalism and indigenous apprenticeship systems, the study advances an African philosophy of TVET rooted in holism, praxis, communal sustainability and epistemic decolonization. The researcher concludes that re-grounding TVET in African philosophical thought, informed by African Philosophy of Education, however, elevates it beyond technical skill acquisition toward a transformative model of human and communal development.

Keywords: African philosophy, TVET, communalism, indigenous knowledge, philosophy of education, decolonization, vocational education

Introduction

Philosophy interrogates the foundations of all disciplines by asking ultimate questions concerning reality (metaphysics), knowledge (epistemology), and value (axiology). For this reason, it has historically been described as the “mother of all knowledge” and the “queen of the sciences.” Education, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), is grounded in philosophical assumptions about the nature of learning, the purpose of work, and the goals of human development.

TVET is commonly defined as education and training that equips learners with practical skills, competencies, and knowledge required for specific occupations and livelihoods (UNESCO, 2015). However, beyond policy definitions lies a deeper philosophical inquiry: What conception of the human person underlies TVET? What understanding of knowledge legitimizes practical skills? And what societal vision guides vocational formation? This paper situates within the bounds of Afromodality properly expressed in African philosophy, and TVET within philosophy of education and develops an African philosophical framework capable of reimagining TVET as a holistic, communally oriented and culturally grounded enterprise.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria occupies a strategic position in the nation's educational and economic development agenda. It is designed to equip individuals with practical skills, technical knowledge, and entrepreneurial competencies necessary for employment, self-reliance, and national productivity. Within the framework of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2014), TVET is recognized as a critical pathway for producing skilled manpower in applied sciences, technology, business, and crafts. In response to rising youth unemployment and skills mismatch in the labour market, Nigeria has increasingly repositioned TVET toward competency-based and industry-driven training. The introduction of the National Skills

Qualifications Framework (NSQF) by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) seeks to standardize skill levels, integrate formal and informal training systems, and enhance the credibility and portability of vocational qualifications (NBTE, 2020). This reform reflects a broader national commitment to strengthening practical education and aligning training outcomes with economic realities. Thus, TVET in Nigeria is not merely an alternative educational track but a deliberate national strategy for human capital development, industrial growth, and sustainable socio-economic transformation.

Nigeria's TVET Policy and Regulatory Framework

An overview of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) shows that in Nigeria is guided by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) and aims to provide skilled manpower, promote entrepreneurship, and reduce unemployment. TVET focuses on practical, hands-on skills in applied sciences, technology, business, and trades, aligning education with industry needs and national development goals. A major reform is the shift to competency-based training under the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF). The NSQF standardizes skill levels across formal, non-formal, and informal pathways, allows recognition of prior learning, and links TVET outcomes to employment and self-reliance (NBTE, 2020). The policy also emphasizes industry collaboration, accreditation, and quality assurance to ensure graduates are work-ready. The *Policy Goals* are:

1. Equip Nigerians with practical, industry-relevant skills.
2. Promote self-reliance and entrepreneurship.
3. Reduce youth unemployment through skill development.
4. Support industrialization and national development.
5. Recognize and integrate informal sector skills into formal TVET systems.

The Regulatory Bodies and core duties

- Federal Ministry of Education (FME) Provides overall policy direction and supervises TVET programs.
- National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) Regulates and accredits TVET institutions (polytechnics, technical colleges, VEIs); develops curricula; implements NSQF; ensures quality.
- National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) Conducts examinations and issues technical/business certificates.
- Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Supports industry-based skills development and apprenticeship programs.
- National Directorate of Employment (NDE) Offers vocational training and entrepreneurship initiatives for unemployed youth.

TVET means Technical and Vocational Education and Training. TVET in Nigeria is all about practical skills, employability, and self-reliance—training people to do things, not just talk about them. It focuses on equipping learners with hands-on technical skills for specific trades, professions, and industries. In Nigerian Curriculum TVET covers and spans across areas skill acquisition. In short, TVET, delivered through Technical colleges, Vocational enterprise institutions (VEIs), Innovation enterprise institutions (IEIs), Polytechnics and monotechnics, Skills acquisition centres and apprenticeship schemes; regulated and supported through bodies like NBTE (National Board for Technical Education), NABTEB (National Business and Technical Examinations Board), ITF (Industrial Training Fund), NDE (National Directorate of Employment) NBTE (National Board for Technical Education), NABTEB (National Business and Technical Examinations Board), ITF (Industrial Training Fund) and NDE (National Directorate of Employment), covers and scans through skills you can use immediately to earn a living.

Philosophical Foundations of TVET

Philosophy has long been described as the “mother of all knowledge” and the “queen of the sciences.” This description is not mere rhetoric; it reflects the historical and functional role

philosophy has played in the birth, growth, and critical evaluation of all disciplines known to humanity. Before the sciences became specialized and autonomous, they were branches of philosophy. Physics was once called natural philosophy; psychology was part of moral philosophy; political science emerged from political philosophy; and theology developed through philosophical reflection. In this foundational sense, philosophy is the womb from which other disciplines were born. Philosophy earns the title “mother” because it asks the most fundamental questions: What is real? What can we know? What is truth? What is good? What is the human person? Every discipline, whether consciously or not, presupposes answers to these questions. For instance, science assumes that the world is rational and intelligible (a metaphysical assumption), that human reason can know reality (an epistemological assumption), and that truth is worth pursuing (an axiological assumption). These are philosophical commitments. Without them, scientific inquiry would lack coherence.

Philosophy is also called the “queen of the sciences” because of its critical and normative role. It does not merely collect data; it interrogates the foundations, methods, and implications of other fields. While biology studies life, philosophy of biology examines what “life” means and how biological explanations function. While law develops legal systems, philosophy of law questions the nature of justice and legitimacy. Thus, philosophy governs not by domination but by illumination and critique. It evaluates assumptions, clarifies concepts, exposes contradictions, and synthesizes fragmented knowledge into a coherent worldview. Because of its universal and critical nature, philosophy has application in all disciplines. This explains the proliferation of specialized branches such as philosophy of science, philosophy of education, philosophy of religion, philosophy of medicine, philosophy of technology, and philosophy of art. Each of these fields reflects on the underlying principles, methods, and goals of its respective discipline. Philosophy does not compete with these fields; rather, it deepens them by asking second-order questions—questions about the meaning, justification, and implications of their practices.

The philosophical foundation of *Technical and Vocational Education and Training* (TVET) is rooted in many schools of thought pragmatism, realism, humanism and social reconstructionism. At its core, TVET is grounded in pragmatism, especially as articulated by John Dewey, who emphasized learning by doing; that is, education is rooted in experience and problem-solving. Knowledge, which universal application is not merely theoretical but practical, experiential, and action-oriented. TVET therefore prioritizes competence, skill acquisition, problem-solving, and the application of knowledge to real-life situations. TVET embodies this orientation by privileging “learning by doing,” apprenticeship, and work-based learning.

Realism also undergirds TVET by affirming the objective nature of the material world and the need for learners to understand and manipulate their environment through scientific and technical knowledge. TVET curricula are thus structured around measurable competencies, industry standards, and observable performance outcomes. From a humanistic perspective, TVET recognizes the dignity of labour and the holistic development of the person. It challenges the false hierarchy between intellectual and manual work, affirming that technical skills contribute meaningfully to personal fulfillment and social identity.

Finally, social reconstructionism situates TVET within socio-economic transformation. By equipping individuals with employable and entrepreneurial skills, TVET combats poverty, reduces unemployment, and promotes sustainable development. Thus, philosophically, TVET is not merely workforce preparation; it is an educational paradigm that integrates theory and practice, individual growth and societal progress, knowledge and productive engagement. Hence, humanistic educational philosophy maintains that education should foster the integral development of the person—intellectual, moral, emotional, and social (Noddings, 2016). Contemporary UNESCO frameworks echo this position by situating TVET within lifelong

learning and sustainable development goals (UNESCO, 2015). Thus, philosophically, TVET must engage with meaningful participation in society.

In sum, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), when viewed philosophically, transcends mere skills acquisition and becomes a reflection on the nature of knowledge, work, and human flourishing. Rooted in pragmatic philosophy, TVET affirms learning through experience and productive engagement (Dewey, 1938). However, within African contexts, its philosophical grounding must reflect communal ontology and indigenous epistemologies. African thought, captured in Mbiti's (1969) dictum, "I am because we are," situates education within community and moral responsibility. Traditional apprenticeship systems demonstrate that vocational formation historically integrated technical competence, character formation, and social reintegration (Meagher, 2010). Thus, an African philosophy of TVET emphasizes praxis, communal sustainability, and epistemic decolonization (Hountondji, 1996). Rather than viewing vocational education as inferior to academic learning, this framework recognizes skilled practice as legitimate knowledge and a pathway to dignity, entrepreneurship, and social transformation.

African Philosophical Foundations of TVET

African philosophical foundations of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) are grounded in communal ontology, experiential knowledge, and holistic human development. Unlike purely technocratic conceptions of vocational education, African philosophy situates learning within the fabric of community and moral responsibility. Mbiti's (1969) famous assertion, "I am because we are," reflects a relational worldview in which skills acquisition is not merely for individual advancement but for communal sustainability. Thus, vocational competence is ethically oriented toward shared prosperity and social cohesion.

Indigenous apprenticeship systems across Africa illustrate this philosophical grounding. In the Igbo apprenticeship model, for example, technical training is integrated with mentorship, character formation, entrepreneurship, and eventual social reintegration (Meagher, 2010). Knowledge here is praxis-oriented—validated through lived performance rather than abstract theorization. This aligns with Dewey's (1938) pragmatist insight that education emerges through experience and purposeful activity. Furthermore, African philosophical discourse calls for epistemic decolonization, challenging the marginalization of indigenous vocational knowledge systems (Hountondji, 1996). An African foundation of TVET therefore affirms the dignity of skilled labor, recognizes informal knowledge as legitimate, and promotes education that sustains culture, fosters innovation, and advances communal well-being.

Within this universal framework, African philosophy and its derivative branches—such as African philosophy of education, African philosophy of religion, African political philosophy, and African philosophy of technology—emerge as culturally grounded expressions of this critical enterprise. If philosophy is universal in scope, it is also particular in expression. Every culture reflects philosophically on reality from within its own historical and experiential horizon. African philosophy interrogates reality from African lived experiences, communal values, proverbs, myths, and socio-political struggles. For example, African philosophy of education does not merely adopt Western models but critically examines education through *Afromodals*¹, or other communal frameworks. African political philosophy rethinks

¹ Onebunne (2025) is of the opinion that *Afromodal* is a African concept that encapsulates all the attitudinal relationship of valued love and every form of responseability of the other. *Afromodal*, is a conceptual framework and a neologism which upholds the genesis of the core of African communal philosophies and critical modalities such *igwebuike*, *ubuntu*, *egbeberegobere*, *onyeaghananwanneya*, *birikambiri*, *kwetuisim*, *njikoka*, *consciencism*, *ibuananyidanda* and several others which share common philosophical threads and dealings within the African roots but increasingly and manifestly very inclusive of all traditions and languages. The *Afromodals* are the above named concepts. *Afromodal* is phonetically pan-African—not overly language-specific, but influenced by indigenous tongues. It instills the sense of warmth, connection, community, life, peace, solidarity,

governance in light of indigenous ideas of consensus and communal responsibility. In this way, philosophy remains both universal in method and particular in context.

Ultimately, philosophy's uniqueness lies in its reflexivity; it turns thought upon itself. It asks not only what we know, but how and why we know. It seeks coherence across disciplines and cultures. As long as human beings continue to question, reflect, and seek meaning, philosophy will remain the mother of knowledge and the queen that critically guides all sciences. Therefore, philosophy's universal application does not dissolve differences but enables dialogue. It provides the critical tools for examining every field while allowing each culture to interpret and reconstruct knowledge in ways meaningful to its lived reality. Philosophy remains mother because it births inquiry; it remains queen because it evaluates and orders it; and it remains universal because wherever human beings think, question, and seek meaning, philosophy is at work. In essence, philosophy is not one discipline among others, it is the reflective soul of all disciplines. It must be noted that *African Philosophical Foundations of TVET* will highly appreciated through a proper appreciation of *African Philosophy of Education*.

Functional Definition of African Philosophy of Education

There is therefore this unique differential nuances of the definitions of African philosophy of education. This leads to the the idea of linking education and philosophy with prepositional conjuncts like *and, of, in, at* and *for which, however*, was borrowed from the unique work of Smith, G. (1964), *Philosophy of Education*.

● **African Philosophy as Education**

African philosophy can be conceivably appreciated in many ways alongside the idea of education. *In lato sensu*, African philosophy of education can be understood in many ways. Primarily African philosophy can be seen as an activity of the mind while education remains a process of personal development, (Smith, 1964). This is why African Philosophy of Education is appreciated more within the conjunctive bounds and comprehensible propositional limits of African Philosophy and Education, African Philosophy in Education as well as African Philosophy for Education. The concepts of African philosophy and education show a relationship between African philosophy as a discipline and education as disciplinary meaningful process of *educere* and *educare*. The *and* in between African philosophy and education connects the two concepts. It links the conceptual ideas of African philosophy and education. Beyond the sequential appreciation of *and* in the theme above it expresses a joint action and shared characteristics between African philosophy and education. African philosophy, therefore, studies and is greatly concerned with the products of education as regards nature of reality, knowledge and values.

● **African philosophy and Education**

The relationship between African philosophy and education is deeply rooted in the values and principles of traditional African societies. African philosophy provides a framework for understanding education as a holistic, communal, and utilitarian process that aligns with the cultural, moral, and practical needs of African communities. In African Philosophical dispensation, education goes beyond formal schooling to encompass moral, spiritual, intellectual, and physical development; emphasizes learning by doing, that is acquiring practical skills that ensures learners are equipped to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Education in this relationship entails and involves the community participation in nurturing values and skills that benefit everyone, reflecting the belief that "a person is a person through other people". African education within the limits of African philosophy is

Onebunne, J. I. (2025). "An Exposition of the Afromodal: Exploring a New framework of Connectedness". In *Nnadiabube Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 8, NO.3, 2025. <https://www.acjol.org/index.php/NJP/article/view/6818/6605>.

utilitarian in nature. Hence, African philosophy of education challenges colonial legacies by reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems, integrating African values and perspectives into curricula, emphasizing the preservation and celebration of African heritage. African philosophy views education as a process of enculturation, aimed at preserving cultural identity, fostering social cohesion, and equipping individuals for meaningful participation in their societies. (Smith, P. G. 1964. *Philosophy of Education*. London: Harper and Row)

● African Philosophy in Education

The preposition "in" is used to indicate various relationships involving location, time, state, condition, or involvement. Its meaning depends on the context in which it is used, (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Here are the primary uses of "in": African philosophy in education shows a form of involvement of African philosophy in education. To what extent is African philosophy involved in the development of the content of the curriculum and general pursuit of education. The *in* in the African philosophy in education serves to establish a relationship of presence, containment, or engagement of African philosophy in education. This is why, African philosophy in education refers to the application of African philosophical principles to teaching, learning, and the overall approach to knowledge. It emphasizes values, cultural relevance, and the holistic development of individuals within their communities. In sum, African philosophy in education advocates for a system that respects and integrates African cultural heritage, emphasizes communal values, and prepares individuals for practical and moral contributions to their communities. It is a call for education that reflects Africa's unique identity. Expanding Smith, P. G. (1964) view, one can say that that African philosophy in education is the sole attempt to view education in the comprehensive, penetrating and flexible manner that has characterized the philosophic approach regardless of the problem area

● African Philosophy for Education

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.) maintains that for is —used as a function word to indicate the object or recipient of a perception, desire, or activity. The preposition "for" before a concept or word indicates purpose or reason, support or advocacy, intent, Suitability or appropriateness, benefit or representation. Its meaning depends on the context. In these presumed and presupposed uses, "for" establishes a connection that emphasizes the idea of purpose, benefit, or alignment with the concept that follows. In this appreciable understanding, therefore, African Philosophy for education suggests the application, contribution, or alignment of African philosophy to the field of education. The phrase could carry several nuanced meanings depending on the context. African philosophy as a framework or foundation to shape educational systems, curricula, and teaching practices. Promoting African philosophy remains a critical component of education that ensures representation, diversity, and decolonization of knowledge systems. African philosophy is well- designed and suited to address specific educational challenges or goals. African philosophy being taught in or for educational institutions as a subject to cultivate critical thinking, identity, and cultural awareness. African philosophy contributes to the development of education especially the content of the curriculum by providing alternative ways of understanding knowledge, ethics, and human development. In sum, African philosophy for education emphasizes the role of African philosophy in enhancing, transforming, or informing educational systems and practices. (Merriam-Webster. (n.d.).

African Philosophy of Education²

The preposition "of" primarily indicates a relationship or connection between two elements in a sentence. Its meaning can vary depending on the context, but it often denotes Possession or

² Onebunne, J. (2025). *A Rethought in African Philosophy of Education: Re-imagining Communal Modalities*. Unpublished Manuscript. In this proposed book Onebunne, J. I. x-rays a comprehensive appreciation of African Philosophy of Education in line with his earlier work: *Philosophies Through African Philosophy*.

belonging, Part-whole relationship, Origin or source, Cause or reason, Material or content, Subject or reference and Apposition or identification. *Of* serves as a versatile connector, linking ideas and clarifying relationships between nouns, (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). By way of definition, African philosophy of education is an applied philosophical discipline that explores how African cultural, ethical, and philosophical traditions while reshaping the purposes, processes, and ideals of education. African philosophy of education encompasses the onerous acts of directing, guiding and regulating education as such as a product (of knowledge, truth and value), process (via mentoring, training, teaching, instruction, etc) and a discipline (as one of the formal subjects and courses in our schools and institutions of learning). It seeks to align educational practices with the continent's socio-political cum traditional realities, cultural values and developmental needs. Rooted in African concepts, it emphasizes Afrocentric models in its approaches reflecting African worldviews. This philosophy also critiques Eurocentric models, aiming to decolonize education and make it relevant to African contexts, fostering holistic development and societal progress.

Branches of African Philosophy of Education

a. The philosophy of education explores the fundamental principles, goals, and methods of education. It is divided into several branches, each focusing on different aspects of educational thought and practice. The major branches include: *African Metaphysical Education (Nature of Reality in Education)*, *African Epistemological (Nature and Sources of Knowledge)*, *African Axiological (Aesthetics, Values and Ethics in Education)*, *African Logical Education (Reasoning and Critical Thinking in Education)*, *African Political Education*, *African Social Education*, *African Scientific-Tech Education*, *African Arts and Humanities Education*, *African Comparative and Historical Education* and *Other Minor Areas or Branches of African Philosophy of Education: Afrocentric Educational Philosophy, Ethnophilosophical and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Critical and Liberation Philosophy, Hermeneutical and Dialogical Approaches, Emwisdomized Sagical Approaches and Afromodal (Communitarianism-Ubuntu) Approaches*

In sum, the African philosophy of education encompasses various branches that help define the purpose, methods, and values of education. These branches provide educators and policymakers with theoretical foundations to improve teaching and learning processes. African philosophy of education is a discipline that applies African philosophical thought to educational theory and practice. It is rooted in indigenous African knowledge systems, cultural values, and the historical experiences of African societies.

An Afromodalistic Perspective of TVET:

Afromodalistic perspective is within the purview of philosophical excursus as established in African philosophical foundations and delineations. Hence, the African philosophical foundation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) may be best understood through what can be described as an Afromodalistic orientation—that is, a framework that integrates African indigenous epistemologies, communal ontology, moral humanism, and context-responsive praxis into the structure and purpose of vocational education. Unlike Eurocentric paradigms that often emphasize technocratic efficiency, individual competitiveness, and industrial productivity, the African philosophical grounding of TVET situates skill acquisition within a broader moral, communal, and existential horizon. It is not merely about producing workers but about forming socially responsible persons embedded within a network of communal relationships with connected dependence for all.

At the ontological level, African philosophy conceives the human person as fundamentally relational. The well-known Ubuntu maxim, “*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (a person is a person through other persons), expresses a metaphysics of interdependence (Mbiti, 1969; Tutu, 1999). In this view, education, including TVET, is not an individualistic pursuit but a communal project aimed at sustaining collective wellbeing. TVET, therefore, becomes a social instrument for strengthening communal resilience, economic solidarity, and shared

prosperity. Skill formation is evaluated not solely by market outcomes but by its contribution to social harmony and communal upliftment.

Epistemologically, African philosophy recognizes multiple modes of knowing, including experiential, oral, practical, and spiritual knowledge systems (Wiredu, 1998; Hountondji, 1996). Precolonial African societies developed sophisticated indigenous apprenticeship systems through which knowledge was transmitted via observation, participation, imitation, and mentorship. The Igbo apprenticeship system (*Igba-Odibo*), for example, integrates economic training with moral instruction, communal trust, and entrepreneurial empowerment. This model exemplifies what can be termed Afromodalistic TVET: education that blends technical competence with character formation and community accountability. Such systems reflect Deweyan experiential learning, yet they predate and transcend Western pragmatism in their communal grounding. Furthermore, African humanism challenges the colonial dichotomy between intellectual and manual labour. Colonial education systems in Africa often privileged literary and clerical training while devaluing indigenous crafts and technical skills (Rodney, 1972). An Afromodalistic foundation for TVET resists this epistemic hierarchy by affirming the dignity of labour as intrinsic to human fulfillment. Work is not merely economic survival; it is participation in the creative and moral order of the community. Gyekye (1997) argues that African communalism balances individual initiative with collective responsibility—a principle that aligns strongly with entrepreneurial TVET models oriented toward cooperative development rather than isolated competition.

In addition, African philosophy is inherently reconstructive and developmental. It seeks social transformation rooted in indigenous values (Nyerere, 1968). Nyerere's concept of Education for Self-Reliance emphasized productive learning integrated with community needs, echoing contemporary calls for context-driven TVET across Africa. Such a vision positions TVET as a vehicle for economic emancipation, poverty reduction, and sustainable development, consistent with African Union educational frameworks (African Union, 2014). However, its philosophical legitimacy derives not from global competitiveness alone but from its rootedness in African socio-cultural realities. An Afromodalistic TVET framework also aligns with decolonial thought. Hountondji (1996) critiques the extraversion of African knowledge systems—where knowledge production is oriented outward rather than inward. Re-centering African epistemologies in TVET curricula reclaims indigenous technologies, agricultural practices, environmental management systems, and craft traditions as valid knowledge domains. This intellectual re-centering is essential for epistemic justice and sustainable innovation.

In sum, the African philosophical foundation of TVET, understood as Afromodalistic, synthesizes Afromodal relational ontology, indigenous epistemology, communal humanism, and reconstructive developmentalism. It affirms that vocational education is not merely technical training but a culturally grounded process of forming competent, morally responsible, and community-oriented persons. Such a foundation ensures that African TVET systems contribute not only to industrial growth but also to social cohesion, identity affirmation, and sustainable communal flourishing. African philosophy of education conceives education as a holistic process of forming the individual for meaningful participation in communal life, rather than mere accumulation of abstract knowledge (Wiredu, 1980; Fafunwa, 1974). Within this framework, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) emerges as a contemporary expression of traditional African educational ideals. A central feature of African education is its pragmatic and experiential orientation. Knowledge is validated through usefulness and social relevance. Traditional African societies emphasized learning by doing—children learned farming, crafts, governance, and morality through participation and apprenticeship (Fafunwa, 1974). TVET reflects this pedagogical logic by prioritizing competency-based, hands-on training, where learners are assessed by practical performance rather than theoretical abstraction alone.

Furthermore, African philosophy of education is deeply communalistic. Education is a shared social responsibility, transmitted across generations through mentoring and apprenticeship systems (Mbiti, 1969). TVET aligns with this worldview through workplace learning, industrial attachments, and master-apprentice models, echoing the African humanist principle of Ubuntu, which emphasizes relational existence and collective flourishing (Tutu, 1999). Moral and character formation also occupy a central place in African educational thought. Education must cultivate good character (*iwa*, *omoluabi*, *mmụọ ọma*) alongside skill and intelligence (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). Properly structured TVET integrates work ethics, discipline, responsibility, and respect for labour, thereby affirming the African conviction that technical skill without moral grounding is incomplete.

From a decolonial perspective, TVET challenges the colonial legacy of education in Africa that privileged literary and clerical knowledge over productive labour (Rodney, 1972). By re-centering indigenous skills, local technologies, and community-oriented development, TVET resonates with African philosophies of self-reliance and human development, as articulated by Nyerere (1968). In sum, TVET is not foreign to African philosophy of education; rather, it represents its practical realization—an education rooted in communal values, experiential learning, moral formation, and socio-economic relevance.

Conclusion

An African philosophy of TVET reframes skills education as a culturally grounded, ethically infused, and development-oriented enterprise. Rooted in African ontology, epistemology, and ethics, it offers a transformative framework for reimagining TVET as a driver of human dignity, communal sustainability, and postcolonial development in Africa. In sum, the African philosophical foundation of TVET — interpreted as *Afromodalistic* — is not merely a technical adjustment to imported models. It is a holistic educational philosophy that synthesises Ubuntu humanism, Afrocentric agency, traditional apprenticeship, and community-centred epistemologies. Such a foundation positions TVET as a transformative tool of decolonisation, social cohesion, and sustainable development — ensuring that education for skills is also education for African identity, dignity, and collective progress.

Nigeria's TVET policy framework represents a multi-layered policy ecosystem driven by national government priorities, regulatory bodies, and skills standard frameworks. Anchored in practical learning, accreditation, and quality assurance, the framework aims to reshape TVET into a vehicle for economic growth, self-employment, and human capital development. However, effective implementation demands stronger governance, industry collaboration, and sustained funding. This approach positions TVET as a philosophical space where knowledge, skill, identity, and society intersect, ensuring not merely technical competence but deep human and communal relevance.

An African philosophy of TVET reaffirms that education is a philosophical undertaking—one that must critically interrogate its own purposes, methods, and outcomes in light of cultural realities. As philosophy is both foundational and critical, an African philosophical lens can transform TVET into a vehicle for meaningful human flourishing, community resilience, and sustainable development—not merely a labor-market response, but a philosophical practice rooted in values that reflect African peoples' histories, possibilities, and aspirations.

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