

## TVET and Nurturing Skills for Sustainable Regional Development: Perspectives from West Africa

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### Abstract

With the increasing awareness among global governments on the need to invest in knowledge and skills as foundation for developing an employable and globally competitive workforce, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is considered as pivotal to achieving both national and regional development goals. The renewed acknowledgment of the critical role TVET plays in providing platform for the development of skills for the world of work has brought it back to the front burner after decades of its neglect for other arms of education by many governments in West Africa as well as Sub-Sahara Africa. Despite the increased awareness, provision of appropriate learning materials is hampered by lack of funds as many countries in the region have not been able to finance TVET at a level that can support quality training. The region faces the enormous challenge of providing stable and sustained socio-economic development that will provide room for lifting the region's young population out of poverty induced by unemployment and protect the region from poverty-triggered insecurity. The West Africa region faces human capital development challenges; youth unemployment, under-employment and working in vulnerable conditions thrive in the region in the face of abundant natural resources, and an unabated struggle with the absence of enabling environments for employment opportunities to thrive. This paper examines the status of TVET delivery in West Africa, the nexus between TVET and skills development, identifies regional priorities and strategies for development of TVET linked to the regional development using eclectic data gathering approach, literature reviews and document analysis. Recommendations are made for more inclusive approach to TVET delivery, increased funding, concerted regional framework for effective skills development, strategic engagement of the private sector in TVET delivery and provision of targeted programs for cultivating relevant skills needed for access to decent work, life-long learning and preparation for responsible citizenship among the growing youth population.

**Keywords:** TVET, Skill, Regional Development, West Africa

### 1. Introduction

The region of West Africa, comprising of fifteen countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo), has an estimated population of over 350million based on the latest UN World Population Prospects report (United Nations Population Division, 2017). The youth population constitutes about two-third of the total population (AFDB, 2011). The region is a politically and culturally complex region, with diversity of religions, dialects, and vestiges of colonial systems reinforced by the linguistic divide. Despite these inherent complex diversities, West Africa is relatively more permissive than in other regions of the continent when it comes to the movement of people because of regional policies implemented by the countries in the region encouraging free movement of people, issuance of an ECOWAS passport, and so on. With over-reliance on primary commodity exports and paid government employment in the formal sector, as well as prevalence of unorganized recruitment in the informal, less productive sector, the region continues to lag in both the continental and global competitiveness ladder compared to other regions on the continent despite the abundant human and material resources available at its disposal. West Africa is endowed with a vibrant and economically viable youth population that needs to be engaged in productive ventures to help make significant contributions to the development and increased competitiveness of the region.

West Africa has an economically active working age population of over 119 Million with more than 3 million new entrants annually (UNECA & UNFPA, 2016; United Nations, 2016). The region is faced with persistent high level of youth unemployment linked to lack of relevant practical skills. The region is ranked as the second growing economy on the continent after the East Africa region (AFDB, OECD, & UNDP, 2016) with employment in the region concentrated in the informal sector characterized by low productivity, working poverty and vulnerability (AFDB, 2011; ILO, 2016). The region's heavy dependence on exports of primary commodities to the rest of the world has made it to occupy the bottom rungs in the Global Value Chain and inhibits employment opportunities requiring productive skills. There is the need to promote technical and vocational skills at the formal and informal sector to meet the growing need for skilled and globally competitive workforce to keep the region on the path of sustainable growth and development. Access to formal TVET is abysmally low, and few countries in the region have training policies emphasizing skills development in the informal sector, poor quality training as well as obsolete equipment are prevalent (AFDB, 2008).

Most of the countries in the region are faced with the problem of funding effective TVET delivery for skills development thereby leading to the unattractiveness of TVET. No one is keen on blue-collar careers in a society in which social advancement depends much more on academic careers. The African continent has the fastest-growing population in the world and its population is predicted to have the most favourable demographics in the world with the working age population increasing rapidly than the total population, but the lack of necessary skills in the growing labour force is a key downside risk that could impact this expected productivity growth especially for countries in the East, West and Central Africa regions (AFDB et al., 2016).

Against the political and cultural context of West Africa coupled with diversity of religions, dialects, national objectives, policies and histories, it is complex to assess education policies in the region. However, there is a growing region-wide common attention on reforming TVET at national and regional levels with member countries in the region united together in purpose for incorporating TVET in their national or regional development plan. In addition, there is a growing concern, motivated by globalization and migration trends, that the reforms of national vocational education and training systems need to be placed in an international perspective. The international dimensions of vocational education and training are becoming increasingly important—in a way similar to what has already happened with higher education and, indeed, employment systems and labour markets (Atchoarena, 2009). West Africa is one of the least integrated into the Global Value Chains especially in industrial production. The economy of most of the countries in the region is dominated by export of primary commodities and little industrialization (AFDB, OECD, & UNDP, 2017). There is need for governments in the region to provide opportunity for decent work and lifelong learning for the young population thereby increasing the region's global competitiveness.

TVET has been described as a crucial platform for the acquisition of skills and knowledge for employment and sustainable livelihood (Maclean & Wilson, 2009). There is a growing awareness that Higher TVET skills are vital in enhancing competitiveness and contributing to social inclusion, decent work, and poverty reduction (AFDB, 2008). Provision of skills oriented TVET programs will bring about the nurturing of employable skills or skills for job creation.

It is imperative therefore to carry out an examination of TVET delivery in West Africa with spotlight on existing structure of formal TVET delivery, the challenges and opportunities available for TVET in developing relevant skills for the sustainable regional growth.

## **2. Conceptual Framework**

### *2.1. TVET Defined*

In defining technical and vocational education and training, this study relies on the broad definition of technical and vocational education and training used in the UNESCO and ILO Recommendations on TVET for the Twenty-first Century: “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 the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.” TVET refers, therefore, to range of learning experiences that are relevant for the world of work and which may occur in a variety of learning contexts, including educational institutions and work places. TVET encompasses formal learning (provided in educational institutions or by public/private providers, as well as on the job) and non-formal learning (learning within or outside the work place, usually outside educational institutions, such as traditional apprenticeship), aiming to ensure that all members of the community have access to the pathways of life-long learning. TVET includes both initial vocational training undertaken by young people prior to entering the labour market and continuing vocational training undertaken by adults whilst in work or during periods in which they are economically inactive. The Recommendations understand technical and vocational education as:

- (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 a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- (d) an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development;
- (e) a method of facilitating poverty alleviation.” (UNESCO, 2002).

### *2.2. Regional Development*

Regional approach to development has been identified as catalyst to the growth and development of developing countries. Studies on the factors responsible for regional development have identified three approaches, with some studies emphasizing structural factors, such as conglomeration of high tech business firms, knowledge-based enterprises with active research and development programmes, highly skilled workforce and so on, being determinants of regional growth, arguing that these factors will determine the best performing regions (Kearns, Bowman, & Garlick, 2008). In their study, Kearns et al also identified studies which hinged successful regional growth and competitiveness on the presence of sufficient firms and institutions advocating collaborative

arrangements built on trust and reciprocity, accepting social and environmental responsibility, building social capital in the regional community, facilitating learning and knowledge exchange, and other 'untraded' interdependencies. The other approach sees regional success resulting from wider spectrum beyond regional attributes, arguing that the most successful regions are those that can best utilize its human capital in enterprising ways, in concert with other regional attributes, and not allowing its human capital to remain significantly underutilized or have it drained out to benefit other places. It advocates that regions develop a human capital strategy that embraces education institutions as well as other regional organizations, that focuses on the translation of creative ideas, outside of entity strictures, into meaningful outcomes of regional significance.

A key factor in the components of factors identified as catalyst of regional development is the human resources, which has been designated as an independent value factor of regional economy in its quest for development and innovation (Deitmer & Gerds, 2002). Regional development is seen in a much broader view of an innovation and learning environment rather than a geographical entity. Camagni, 1991 cited by Deitmer & Gerds (2002) opined that the region is better understood as the totality of the socio-cultural elements guiding the actions of individuals and social actors, with emphasis on collective learning among the actors in the environment which facilitates the improvement of the regional environment for development and innovation. The region is not just a geographical space but a socio-economic construct that is capable of action and able to position itself to structure its development activities for the benefits of members of the region (Deitmer & Gerds, 2002).

Regions initiate strong competitive incentives for development through positive competition with other regions creating a new drive and prospects for development through exchange of information and experience with other regions (Huggings, 1997).

### 2.3. Skill

Skill is the ability to do something well; expertise (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). It is the ability to perform a task to a predefined level of competence. Education is believed to help provide individuals with skills that empower them to meet the challenges of daily life. Such skills include cognitive skills which helps individuals to make informed decision in solving problems. There are also social and emotional skills which help individuals translate intentions into actions and establish positive relationships with those around them and avoid anti-social behaviours (Heckman, Urzua, & Stixrud, 2006; Kautz, Heckman, Diris, Weel, & Borghans, 2014). Skills are often divided into two types: transferable or generic skills which can be used across large numbers of different occupations, and vocational skills which are specific occupational or technical skills needed to work within an occupation or occupational group.

## 3. The Form of TVET Delivery in West Africa

TVET program in West African countries is delivered through a wide range of patterns and providers. There are formal, non-formal and informal systems. The formal system is school-based delivered at different levels in different types of institutions, including public and private technical and vocational schools, polytechnics professional institutions and apprenticeship training centers. The modes of delivery are not mutually exclusive as many students combine several of them in pursuing their pathway to work (AFDB & OECD, 2008).

The general trend is that students begin vocational education program at the end of the primary school, as in Burkina Faso. In some other countries, like Ghana, Mali and Nigeria, the student begins vocational education at the end of Junior secondary school. The school based technical and vocational education lasts for three to six years depending on the country. Some countries, like Ghana, incorporated basic vocational skills into the junior secondary school curricula to introduce learners to pre-employment skills early. Traditional apprenticeship offers opportunity for acquiring employable skills in the informal sector. Traditional apprenticeship offers the largest

opportunity for the acquisition of employable skills in the informal sector, because it gives participants access to employment opportunities in the informal sector which is the highest employer of labour (European Commission, 2012).

The task of TVET administration in the countries is shared between ministries of education, technical education and labour or employment, while some specialized programs are under the direct supervision of the relevant ministries, like agriculture, health and transport (African Union, 2007). TVET delivery in general is shared by both government and private providers comprising of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for-profit organizations and Church-based organizations. The non-governmental actors in TVET is on the increase in most countries in terms of students' numbers and institutions. However, the public vocational training institutions tend to have a wide geographical coverage and to focus on training and skills required by highly capital-intensive occupations. The private providers tend to train for the informal sector or the services sector. In West Africa, the traditional apprenticeship system is the largest portion of skills acquisition in the informal sector. The sector accounts for an estimated 84% of skills acquisition in French speaking West Africa (Ahadzie, 2009).

#### 4. Challenges of TVET in West Africa

Formal TVET delivery context in West Africa is characterized in general by low enrollment, which has been linked to the inadequate teaching and learning resources, with many schools not having the required workshop for practical subjects, and in places where workshops exist, they are poorly equipped and lacked trained teachers. Lack of trained manpower to teach technical and vocational education is a key challenge. The delivery of quality TVET is dependent on the competence of the teacher; competence measured in terms of theoretical knowledge, technical and pedagogical skills as well as being abreast with new technologies in the workplace (African Union, 2007).

The formal TVET system in most countries in the region are highly under-funded, as a result, quality of training programmes is seriously affected due to obsolete equipment and poor managerial capacity. TVET teaching materials and equipment are costly, many vulnerable young people have no money to gain access to formal TVET training (AFDB & OECD, 2008). On the other hand, TVET programmes are characterized by weak monitoring and evaluation system. Training programmes in many West African countries are supply driven instead of being demand driven to meet observed or projected labour market demands.

In general, vocational education and training forms a separate parallel system within the education system with its own institutions, programmes, and teachers. This situation tends to reinforce the perception of inferiority of the vocational track in the region. Also lacking in the TVET delivery is provision of guidance and counselling services for learners. There is also a disconnect between formal TVET delivery and the labour market. The number of learners in the formal TVET environment is inadequate in view of the required number to produce the appropriate skilled and competent workforce to undertake tasks that are lifeblood of the social and economic growth of the countries in the region.

There is a general low proportion of TVET in secondary education attributable to the public's attitude towards this type of education which has been influenced by lack of progression to higher level of education and the low-level skills TVET offers (Oketch, 2009). The impression is that TVET is the last option for the low performing students in the regular school system. TVET is unattractive to members of the society. The general impression among people is that the vocational education track is fit for only the academically less endowed, so everyone preferred the regular school system to the TVET stream. Though there is a suggestion that the preference is not a mere prejudice against TVET (King & Martin, 2002), many parents would rather send their children to universities than have them go to TVET institutions.

In many countries, students entering the vocational education stream find it difficult, and most of the times, impossible, to proceed to higher education. TVET is a dead-end. This wrong impression about technical and vocational education among the youth and the society has been identified as one key factor responsible for the high rate of youth unemployment (Adesina, 2013).

#### 5. Basis of TVET for Skills Development in West Africa

Skills and knowledge have been described as engines of economic growth and social development of any nation. Many governments consider investment in knowledge and skills as pivotal to developing an employable and globally competitive work force (AFDB & OECD, 2008; Rees, 1997). Also, young people require skills that prepare them for decent jobs so they can thrive and participate fully in society as skills not only provide workers with a major source of competitiveness but also provides a potential for improvement of living standards as well as determine the direction of capital flow and the strength of regional development activities (Martinez-Fernandez & Sharpe, 2013).

The unlocking of Africa's sources of growth to spur human development has been hinged on greater investment in human capital, which includes health, education and skills to promote structural transformation (AFDB et al., 2017). Investment in education and vocational training has been identified as a major measure that will complement the Global Value Chain (GVC) strategies of developing countries (World Bank, 2015).

Region	Enrolment Rate		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
	(% of primary school-age population)	(% of secondary school-age population)	(% of tertiary school-age population)
Arab States	98	76	30
East Asia and the Pacific	106	88	37
Europe and Central Asia	104	98	55
Latin America and the Caribbean	107	95	44
South Asia	109	65	23
Sub-Saharan Africa	100	43	8
West Africa	99	48	10

Table 1. Education Achievements of Selected World Regions (UNDP HDR Data) retrieved in September 2017

The education system in West African countries has remained grossly liberal at the detriment of a corresponding TVET system that nurtures graduates with employable skills. While the region has made



considerable achievement in primary school enrolment, the rate of enrolment in secondary education, which is the crucible of TVET, remains a cause for concern when compared to other regions in the world. Though good TVET programmes do not in themselves create or ensure employment, the unemployment rate will be reduced when there are synergies between TVET providers, students and employers. Fostering a synergy between the three will promote the effective alignment of economic reforms, sustainable development and job creation for the mass unemployed youth.

With increasing global demand for international competitiveness, flexibility and innovativeness, as well as greater skills and flexibility demands from the labor force, the TVET system in West Africa needs to be positioned to respond appropriately to the increasing influence of globalization on global, regional and national economies, which has made learning become lifelong with its foremost skill being learning how to learn (Wilson, 2001).

## 6. Prospects of TVET for Developing Skills in West Africa

Signals of prospects of TVET in providing a platform for skills development in West Africa appear in existing key institutional frameworks on the continent. At the institutional level, the region can leverage on the frameworks provided by continental bodies like the African Union (AU) and the African development bank (AFDB) for the development of an effective region-wide TVET system. The African Union (African Union, 2007) identified five strategic objectives to position TVET as a tool for empowering Africans with the required skills for sustainable livelihoods and socio-economic development of the continent:

### a) *Delivery of Quality TVET*

Emphasis on providing high-quality skills training backed up with appropriate training equipment and tools, adequate supply of training materials, and practice. It also includes provision of relevant textbooks, training manuals and qualified instructors with experience in enterprises. Competency Based Training (CBT) as embedded in the traditional apprenticeship, particularly as practiced in West Africa, needs to be incorporated into the formal technical and vocational education system.

### b) *Assurance of Trainees' Employability*

Emphasis on provision of effective guidance and counselling to potential trainees in the choice of training programmes in relation to their aptitude and academic background. Employability presupposes the acquisition of employable skills that are related to the demands of the labour market. Tracer studies which track the destination of graduates in the job market can provide useful feedback for the revision of training programmes to enhance the employability of trainees.

### c) *Improve Coherence and Management of Training Provision*

Establishment of a national agency or body to coordinate and drive the entire TVET system. Depending on the national characteristics, the agency could be under the umbrella of the ministry of education and vocational training or a separate and autonomous body and include representation from all relevant stakeholders, including government policy makers, employers, public and private training providers, civil society, alumni associations, and development partners.

### d) *Life-Long Learning*

The skills of the workforce can be continually upgraded through a life-long learning approach, which enables learners who have had limited access to training in the past have a second chance to build on their skills and competencies

### e) *Enhance status and attractiveness of TVET*

TVET should be promoted as a tool for economic empowerment in Africa. For this, the use of role models in TVET and the involvement of successful entrepreneurs in motivation campaigns will be necessary

On the other hand, in leading the campaign for the transformation of TVET and higher education in Africa, the African Development Bank recognized higher education, science and technology as vital tool for Africa's regional integration efforts (AFDB et al., 2016). The bank advocated well targeted vocational training to properly align worker skills with demands in the job market and an increase in the percentage of secondary students receiving TVET and increase in science and technology based higher education to boost growth and development in Africa. The bank's identified priority areas are as follows:

### a) *National and Regional Centres of Excellence*

The creation of centres of excellence to promote the harmonization of training programmes, to provide platforms for scientific and technological research and exchanges with non-African institutions, and to establish networks to link students and researchers

### b) *Infrastructure for education*

The financing of building, upgrading, and rehabilitating of select education institutions, including research laboratories by the Bank.

### c) *Links to the private sector*

Reduction of the constraints of private investments in Africa due to the lack of local skilled and semiskilled

labour as the Bank will link its work in the private sector with education and training programmes that support the use of local labour and develop linkages that can add value in country. This will reduce the tendency of foreign investors resorting to expatriate labour due to lack of local skilled labour

## 7. Regional Priorities for TVET

At the regional level, many countries in the region have made several individual efforts at providing TVET based on the local needs of the affected countries. However, in the face of increasing impact from globalization coupled with constantly changing technological developments on national and regional competitiveness in the globalized economy, a regional approach to TVET with focus on clearly identified regional goals will enhance higher returns on investment than what has been witnessed hitherto in terms of technology and economic development in the region.

The need for a regional approach to TVET has also been recognized by the leading sub-regional body, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with the endorsement of the regional initiatives to promote the development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2012). The initiative is to form national Inter Agency Task Team (IATT) structures involving development partners to produce a directory of all TVET institutions in the sub-region to facilitate exchanges and cooperation. Also, the IATT will support the development of national and Regional Qualification Frameworks that will pave way for recognition of skills and qualifications among the countries in the sub-region. The UNESCO currently has a UNEVOC network of centres across the West Africa region with exception of Guinea to strengthen engagement with stakeholders in TVET in the region.

The various West African countries before now, have no uniform regional qualification framework and no regional platform for TVET. This portrays the collective marginalization of TVET in the various member states. A regional approach to promoting TVET will be of benefit to socio-economic transformation of the region and effectively address the concern of persistent youth unemployment in the region. Adopting a regional approach to promoting TVET in West Africa should be inclusive, project based taking cognizance of maintaining the diversity and specificity of patterns, including practically all key areas of vocational education and training in the following areas as proposed by Masri, (2009):

*a. Occupational Classifications and Standards:* There is the need for regional, internationally compatible occupational classifications and standards.

*b. Testing, Certification and Qualification Frameworks And Standards:* Bearing in mind that design and implementation of National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) differ across the region as they are tied to each country's specific characteristic, it is important to link the NQFs with the Regional Qualification Framework (RQF) to enhance regional portability of technical skills, thereby promoting regional integration and development.

*c. Curriculum Development:* Regional efforts in this area would deal mainly with methodologies, the exchange of experience, standards and labour-market relevance criteria. This does not exclude the utilization of common curricula and education/training material, as was the case for some efforts in the past.

*d. Teacher Education and Training:* The existing TVET teachers training institutions should be further equipped and upgraded to serve the purposes of training and carry out relevant researches in training and curriculum designs. The training of trainers is another relevant area of concern that warrants the availability of regional and excellence centres to offer services to the concerned countries.

*e. Career Guidance, Counselling and Employment Services:* This essential service in TVET institutions is lacking in most countries in the region. The guidance and counseling services will provide professional services to students in academic, personal and career choices.

*f. System Development:* This area would deal with such topics as governance, funding sources, legislative tools, school-based versus co-operative (dual) systems,

etc. Some of the countries in the region share common colonial experiences which can impact positively on regional approaches to VET system development.

*g. Publications:* There should be a pool of publications in the field of TVET apart from textbooks and formal training material, for the use of learners, instructors and researchers to support the VET mission at country and regional level

## 8. Regional Strategies for TVET

To accelerate socio-economic growth and development in West Africa, adoption of regional priorities and strategies is needed to maximize the benefits inherent in TVET for developing productive skills and enhance the quality of human capital in the region. Having identified the priorities of TVET in the region, strategic steps need to be taken to achieve the goal of using TVET as a tool to change the socio-economic landscape of the region through the following:

*a) Scale Up TVET Reform Project*

Individual countries in the region are already pursuing different TVET reform programmes linked to poverty eradication and employment. However, these reforms are rather small scale and need scaling up (AFDB & OECD, 2008). Large scale TVET reform projects requires regional cross-border cooperation framework to be effective, relevant and sustainable.

*b) Sector-Tied Skills Development Programmes*

Regional cooperation framework with focus on TVET reform for regional growth and sustainable development should adopt short and long-term strategies emphasizing development of skills for employment for TVET participants. In the short term, provision should be made for short term training in practical courses for graduates to be employed in identified areas where the skills acquired will be required on completion of training. To promote regional growth and development, emphasis must be placed on developing skills for the sectors with the most promising employment prospects, by enacting and implementing policies that will expand business development and employment in the member countries.

*c) Pro-Active TVET Programme Design*

The over dependence of governments in Africa on donor-dictated TVET program designs should shift to a more pragmatic home-grown design. This requires a clear-cut vision on properly identifying and answering the question of what the common development problem to the region is and the steps to take in addressing it. West Africa and the rest of the Sub-Sahara Africa are faced with huge problems of infrastructure deficit, food insecurity, insufficient energy, inadequate health provision, heavy dependence on resource export and so on. These are key areas that require governments to embark on committed reforms which will eventually create large scale employment opportunities for the unemployed. Acquisition of quality employable skills through TVET is not enough, it must be combined with the dynamism of the economic environment in which the skills are applied.

*d) Specialized Funding*

Funding is a critical hindrance to development of TVET in member countries of the region as national TVET programmes are limited by national budgetary provisions. When budgetary allocations are available, they are applied for operational expenses and none for provision of training equipment thereby affecting practical trainings. Most national funding of TVET also lack effective monitoring and evaluation of institutional objectives and outcomes. Countries in the region have national training funds which have helped in providing pre-employment trainings and in some countries like Benin, Mali and Burkina Faso, there is cross subsidization of training in the informal sector (AFDB & OECD, 2008). Regional funding structure should be financially autonomous to effectively carry out its functions at a regional level. Funding should target key areas of enhancing capacity building in TVET institutions and research on data collection and sharing for curriculum design, job placements and so on.

*e) Regional TVET Commission*

A regional TVET Commission for the region under the auspices of the regional body, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should be set up to coordinate the regional TVET reform and development project leveraging with existing national TVET bodies, international development partners and present a common front for TVET development in the region with focus on shared areas of comparative advantage for immediate, short term and long-term actions. The Commission should set up a regional pivotal science, technology innovation and entrepreneurship anchor institutions to enhance research and training in TVET.

*f) Strengthen Informal TVET*

Efforts of governments in the region at restructuring the informal sector to strengthen it and incorporating the traditional apprenticeship system into the TVET system should be upheld and supported across the region to enhance the employability of trainees in the formal labour market. Programmes should be designed and implemented to strengthen TVET in the informal sector as well as linking the informal sector to the formal sector. Policies should be made to recognize and improve the sector. The informal sector where the apprenticeship system has the largest number of TVET participant should be reformed, re-engineered and packaged to make mobility possible for participants in the formal and the informal sector. However, this reform must take cognizance of the traditional socialization function of this unique skills acquisition sector in the region (Ahadzie, 2009).

*g) Engagement of Public Private Partnership*

The private sector's participation in TVET delivery has shown that more can be achieved when the private sector is effectively engaged. The private sector participation in TVET delivery is well pronounced in offering training for employment in the tertiary sector of the economy because of the low capital required to start up when compared to the capital-intensive trainings for the primary and secondary sectors of the economy. However, private sector participation should be encouraged by providing incentives to attract investment in these sectors.

## 9. Conclusion

The West Africa sub-region is a resource-rich region in Africa with a growing young population who are constantly held in the clutch of unemployment and unemployment related poverty. The informal sector is the largest employer of unskilled labour and the regions keeps struggling to get the army of unemployed youths out of unemployment and poverty. More germane to this quest is the potential threat unemployment and poverty to the peace and security of the region as unemployed youth become easy tools for sponsors of violent extremism. The neglect of TVET has been linked to the lack of employable skills in the unemployed population and evidences showed that TVET has the potential to equip learners with relevant skills required for work and job creation.

Individual efforts of countries in the region has only produced pockets of results which is easily dwarfed by the myriads of developmental demands from the economies of the region as well as the constantly changing world of regional and global competitiveness in a globalized world. The benefits inherent in regional integration and forming a common regional platform in solving common regional problems gave credence to the regional approach to TVET in West Africa.

The renewed efforts at developing TVET at national and regional level should be sustained and all that is required to achieve this must be provided by various stakeholders without reservation.

With the ball already set rolling by relevant stakeholders in the region and the international development partners, it is expected that a new phase of development has come to be for TVET and the West African sub-region will be able to leverage on this new phase to develop the much needed skilled manpower as driving force for the sustainable development and transformation of the region on the one hand, and giving the future leaders of the region an opportunity to effectively contribute their quota as responsible members of the society without denying them the right to lifelong learning on the other hand.

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