

Challenges Facing Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The challenge of unemployment, job creation and skills development and training in order for jobs to become a reality for more people is likely to become accentuated. Considering the era when the forces of economy are highly fluctuating and are becoming unstable. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) appeared as one of the major counter balance force that will transform the economy, by creating skilled work force that could operate independently in the labour market. Based on that, this paper discussed the role TVET plays toward creating sustainable jobs for our teeming unemployed and underemployed youth in Nigeria. The paper also highlighted the consequences of neglecting TVET on Nigeria's economy Issues and challenges that needed TVET Intervention and International Trends in Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET) were also discussed. The paper finally recommended that, to reduce the burden of unemployment and poverty on the youths, the government should improve funding in this critical sector and increase access to technical and vocational education for the ever-growing youths.

Keywords: Technical Education, Vocational Training, Job Creation, Skills Development

Introduction

A critical challenge that faces Nigeria is the development of a competent workforce and sustained economic growth in the global economy. Human resource development, through well planned education and training initiatives can contribute significantly to promoting the interests of individuals, enterprises, economy and society within the nation (Egwu, 2009). By helping individuals gain access to decent work and sustainable jobs, as well as to escape from poverty and marginalization, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) can impact positively on the economic development, achieving full employment and promoting social inclusion. A well-structured TVET system will enable productivity, enhance competitiveness and promote entrepreneurial activity. TVET programmes are defined as those skill based programmes designed mainly to prepare students for direct entry into particular occupations or into a class of occupations and trades. The successful completion of such programme normally leads to a vocational qualification that is relevant to the labour mark and recognized by the relevant authorities (e.g. the Ministry of Education (MoE) and employer's associations) in the country in which it is obtained (UNESCO, 2007).

The primary objective of all technical and vocational education and training programmes is the acquisition of relevant knowledge, practical skills and attitudes for employment in a particular trade or occupational area (ILO, 2005). Skills acquisition is vital for an economy to compete and grow, particularly in an era of economic integration, transformation and technological change. One of the most important features of TVET is its orientation towards the world of work and the emphasis of the

curriculum on the acquisition of employable skills (Owodunmi, 2008). Owodunmi, further observed that, TVET delivery systems are therefore well placed to train the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce that Nigeria needs to create wealth and emerge out of poverty. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) promotes the acquisition, maintenance and further development of abilities, skills and attitudes which enable individuals to engage in dependent and non-dependent employment generate income and benefit from enhanced opportunities for social participation. It is aimed at the comprehensive promotion of the holistic capability to act independently within the scope of and according to the values attached to a skilled, occupation, which includes methodological and social skills alongside work-related expertise (UNESCO, 2007). By acquiring capabilities, individuals are empowered to shape their own lives and work situation pro-actively.

The Neglect of TVET and its Implication on Nigeria's Economy

The neglect of technical and vocational education over the years may have contributed to the high unemployment and rising poverty among the youth, because many of them lack the basic job skills. For this, Nigeria is today categorized under the list of poor nations. It is no longer news that the nation's youth unemployment rate has been shooting up the sky (Dike, 2007). The federal government recently acknowledged that about 80 per cent of Nigeria's youths are unemployed and 10 per cent underemployed (Daily Trust, 2013). And the poor quality of graduates is worrisome (Egwu, 2009). In spite of its abundant natural and human resources, Nigeria still faces an enormous challenge in its effort to reduce poverty. Thus, one way of reducing poverty according to Adegbenjo (2008) is to ensure sustainable job creation through TVET. Many, both in the developed and developing worlds, are increasing the emphasis they place on improving the capacity of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems, in recognition of the important role TVET plays in equipping individuals with relevant skills and knowledge for the job market. TVET can also better enable individuals to participate in social, economic and technological processes (Rupert, 2006). In the interest of sustainable job creation, achievement, and the competitive ability of young people, the whole TVET system has to be oriented towards the labour market and the employment system (Eberhard, 2006). From the foregoing, it can be concluded that Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is such an aspect that its neglect poses a great threat to the economic well being of a nation.

Challenges that needed TVET Intervention

TVET face challenges of meeting the changing demands of today's industries and the new challenges posed by the global economic environment. According to UNESCO (1999) some of these challenges include:

Integration of Education and Workplace: TVET is being offered as formal education, but little reference is being made to the needs of the workplace. Changes in the workplace have not been met with changes in education and training. TVET should cater adequately to the varied needs of members of the society to enter and re-enter the world of work. It should also provide opportunities for achieving both personal and social development.

Uncertainty and Anxiety: Today, more people than ever before experience frequent career changes and periods of unemployment as a result of the changing demands of the workplace. It is difficult to predict with certainty the employment needs of the informal sector which absorbs a major part of the labour force. It is also becoming increasingly difficult for young people to choose courses of study and career they would like to pursue in their adulthood. Adults who may have been laid off or retrenched require guidance and support in looking for new jobs and some time new career. One of the most dangerous consequences of fundamental changes now prevailing in politics and of course, in education is uncertainty. In Nigeria, people are retiring or their appointments are being terminated without knowing what to do next to cater for their needs. Therefore, it is one of the most important tasks of technical and vocational education to enable people cope successfully with their uncertainties.

Trends of Globalization of Trade and Labour Markets: The trends of globalization of trade and labour markets, rapidly changing technologies, and mass unemployment are expected to continue in this century. The effect on these changes in the labour market are that some jobs are declining in significance, others growing in importance and others require completely new and different skills. The size of the workforce employed in the service and technology industries, where a high-level education and skills are required, will increase, while the demand for low-skilled workers will shrink. Many employees are likely to change jobs, and possibly even careers, several times in their working lives. The changing nature of labour market trends has significant implications for education, implying inter alia the need to provide lifelong learning, continuing and recurrent technical and vocational education, continued upgrading of knowledge and skills.

Prepare young people for life: There is a widely shared consensus about the goals of education. It is to prepare young people for life by developing their intellect, their aptitudes and their talents; and to create opportunities for them to earn their living and to take part in the democratic and economic process of the country. All educational systems have to serve these purposes. Vocational education, that is the education and training of skilled workers and employees has to be broader and more diversified. Take for instance, a car mechanic must have diagnostic skills and knowledge (computer literacy), be customer oriented (direct personal contact), have all the skills of the trade (high tech.), must take into account ecological effects of his or her work, be able to calculate the cost of a repair and, more generally, be conscious of adding value.

Flexible access to TVET throughout life: Due to the high cost of TVET, the majority of those who could benefit from it do not have access. Available TVET programmes are often de-linked to a large extent are delivered using traditional theoretical methods. TVET should address the needs of informal sector where most production activities go on.

Challenges of Information and Communication Technology: Information technology (IT) is at the root of a process of transformation in the course of which industrialized societies are changing into knowledge societies and the management of production into the management of knowledge. There will be less and less manual work while computers become the main tools catering for the information needs of all professions. As a result, letters and figures, into which all procedures have to be translated, become more and more important for all human activities at work and in private life. The end of the division of the world has opened the borders to the free flow of capital, goods and information and to unhindered travel of people at large, but not yet in all parts of the world. Going global is the challenge to entrepreneurs and of course to their employees.

Issues in the Technical and Vocational and Training (TVET). UNESCO (1999) identified three major educational issues that can be explored in developing countries like Nigeria. The issues are: the economics of TVET, the social status of TVET and the regional and international dimension of TVET.

The economics of TVET - This concerns the three major factors in TVET systems which include i) the source of finance and methods of funding; ii) matters of costs, efficiency and effectiveness and socio-economic return on investment and iii) evaluation and assessment of the relevant systems and programmes.

The sources of finance and methods of funding TVET programmes in most countries include tax payers through central or local budgets, and employers in the industry and business, who are the main beneficiaries of the output of TVET systems. And learners and trainees themselves and their families, in the case of fee-paying programmes; income generating activities; grants and donations, especially for such programmes as those directed to special groups, including the handicapped and the underprivileged. In most developing countries like Nigeria, public sources of finance for TVET usually predominate. Public funding is in general utilized to finance school systems, and suffers from being inadequate, especially in countries with limited resources, where vocational education is not considered a priority in national budgets.

Matters related to cost, efficiency and effectiveness of vocational education schemes; pose a big challenge in most developing countries. The relevant issues here include, on the planning or macro level, system

choice or the school versus the enterprise issue, the broad versus the narrow base approach to the area of specialization, and the duration of the TVET programme. On the operational or micro level, such issues include trainer-instructor ratios, utilization factors of training facilities, choice of equipment and technologies, and size and nature of productive activities.

Evaluation systems and techniques, which represent the third factor concerning the economics of TVET, are far from being common practice in developing countries. To be effective, evaluation systems should incorporate three main elements: i) internal evaluation, which is mainly concerned with assessing the degree of compatibility between the outputs of the TVET programme and the performance objectives specified for the programme, ii) the economic evaluation, which is basically concerned with such indicators as cost-benefit criteria, changes in the income of the learner's income, changes in productivity at the work place, comparative costing of different TVET systems, and optimum utilization of training facilities and services, iii) external evaluation, which assesses the degree of compatibility between the outputs of TVET programmes on one hand and the labour market needs and employments on the other.

In Nigeria, all aspects related to the economics of vocational education are sources of concern, and even frustration, especially when taking into consideration the relatively high cost of TVET programmes, compared with other educational programmes.

Social Status of TVET: The social status of TVET in any society is, to a great extent, a reflection of the status of work values in the society. A rational and balanced approach can be realized if work activities are assessed both by their material and economic returns on the individual and society, on one hand, and their social and humanizing influences on the other hand. The social status of TVET can, on one hand, be enhanced in practice through appropriate career guidance and counselling services, as well as employment and placement services. Unfortunately, the two types of services are weak in most developing countries, accentuating more the status issues of TVET. In practice, the social status of TVET is also influenced, to a great extent, by the type of relation and nature of channels that link it with higher education that leads to the preparation of professionals. Successful vocational education schemes are usually designed with inherent and built-in links with higher education and occupational levels, through the formal and non-formal systems of education, within the general concept of continuing and life-long education. In some education systems, especially those of developing countries, the realization of this concept would necessitate the restructuring and reform of higher education, in order to eliminate bottlenecks, and establish lateral and vertical channels among various fields and level of educational and training offerings, to promote occupational and educational mobility and, consequently social mobility.

In general, therefore, higher education should be linked with abilities and performance standards of the learner, in respect of the type or stream of pre-university education or training he or she experienced. Other aspects of the status issue of vocational education include such factors as the status of the vocational teacher, the gender issue, and the vocationalization of general education. It is not unusual in many education and training systems to find that vocational teachers are not of equal status, socially and economically, to their general education counterparts. It is also not unusual to find that the relevant vocational education facilities and services are structured basically around the needs of male learners, with the result that the role of female learners, instructors, planners and providers of services, lags considerably behind the roles of males. Finally, a great service can be offered to the status issue, if a strong element of vocational education, or more specifically prevocational education, is incorporated as part of general education in the form of diversified practical activities and life experiences, derived from the various socio-economic sectors.

The Regional and International Dimensions of TVET: The approach to issues related to human resources development in general, and vocational education in particular, is no more a purely national

concern; and now it is even becoming a concern with international dimensions that should take into consideration emerging conditions of increasingly globalized economies of the world, manifested by the changing structure and framework of world trade, labour mobility, common markets, commodity standards, multinationals, and the geographical characteristics of industrialization. It is thus becoming increasingly essential to think regionally and even globally when planning, defining policies and designing programmes at the national level, for the quantitative and qualitative aspects of vocational education as a component of human resources development, especially in such matters as job classification, skill standards, educational levels, information systems and the identification of training needs.

International Trends in Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The world's giant economies known as developed countries such as Canada, Australia, Germany, Singapore and Japan have cuddled TVET and reaped its benefit to become global leaders in all aspects of their enterprise in a very short space of time. The following are key strategies being used by these countries for workforce development. Nigeria as a developing country struggling to be categorized in the top twenty economies by the year 2020 needs to copy and adopt these strategies that are geared towards quality and quantity job creation:

- a) Promotion and marketing of TVET as a viable alternative to the more traditional mode of advancement and education. This could be done through the integration of competency-based training with academia both at the secondary and tertiary level.
- b) Establishment of a National Qualification Framework for education and training that include all levels from pre-primary to post-graduate.
- c) Establishment of National Worker Certification/Licensing Programme.
- d) Development of Industry-led Standard setting bodies in all sectors.
- e) Establishment of an independent labour market observatory.
- f) Provision of labour market reports on a continuing basis - both on the demand and the supply side.
- g) Development of a Dictionary of Occupations aligned to international models.
- h) Creation of mechanisms for defining, classifying, training and certifying people in the informal sector.
- i) Provision of training opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation.
- j) Increasing the Employability and Participation of Vulnerable Groups - young workers, differently-abled, older displaced workers and the incarcerated population.
- k) Establishment of a National Training Fund with contributions from the Government and private sector.
- l) Passage of legislation for the funding, accreditation, standard setting and quality assurance within the national training system.
- m) Development of a Modern Apprenticeship and Traineeship Programmes
- n) Encouragement of lifelong education through a seamless system i.e. school to work and work to school models.
- o) Provision of information on careers & proper career guidance.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the problem of youth unemployment is part of a much larger problem of ineffective labour markets. However, it is also understood that the neglect of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has afflicted much on the Africa continent and Nigeria to be specific, which is also the root cause of unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular. Therefore, a starting point ought to be a strategy that aims at providing TVET education to the whole population in order to ensure that skills acquisitions are deeply rooted in the mind of youths. A reform of the education systems to ensure that TVET have been imparted and such values that promotes self-reliance

and skills development for a good beginning. It is imperative that direct targeting of youth be made in order to reduce further incidences of youth unemployment. More emphasis needs to be put on the youth to be employable or to employ themselves. Imparting entrepreneurial and technical and vocational skills, through training and skills upgrading, is a way of enhancing employability and promoting self-employment. Given the spiralling nature of youth unemployment, Nigeria should adequately address the problem, with the aim of putting in place the requisite policy measures. There is no doubt that piecemeal programmes will not do the job. The TVET Sector in Nigeria generally, will only survive and grow if Industry and commerce are strong enough to attract graduates from the TVET system. A vibrant and industrial and commercial environment will promote the opportunities, avenues and resources to facilitate the provision of a well trained, competent and productive workforce which in turn will strengthen industry and commerce for increased productivity. In this regard, it is very important that every effort must be made by Governments to encourage the expansion and strengthening of industry at all levels (including small scale industries) in order to improve their TVET systems for socio-economic development. To reduce the burden of unemployment and poverty on the youths the government should improve funding in this critical sector and increase access to technical and vocational education for the ever-growing Youths.

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