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## **Technical and Vocational Education: A Vital Tool for Youth Empowerment and Transformation in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is capable of economically empowering the Nigerian Youths that are involved in the incessant cases of armed robbery, cultism, rape, Boko-Haram syndrome among others. These restiveness and restlessness among the youth could be attributed to unemployment, underemployment, lack of possession of saleable skills and the likes. Many Nigerian Youths are idle and an idle hand is a devil's workshop. This paper addressed the issue of TVET as a vital tool for empowering Nigeria Youths; challenges facing development of TVET; benefit of empowering Nigerian youths and impact of technology on youth empowerment in Nigeria. The recommended among others, that There should be policies that will promote TVET programmes which are capable of empowering the society with skills and competencies that could lead to youth empowerment for National transformation.

**Keyword:** Youth empowerment, Skills, Unemployment, TVET programmes, youth restiveness

### **Introduction**

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) refers to education and training that prepares persons for gainful employment (Finch and Crunkilton 1999). In other words, TVET refers to deliberate interventions to bring about learning which would make people more productive (or simply adequately productive) in designated areas of economic activity (e.g. economic sectors, occupations, specific work tasks). TVET has the potential to enhance human capabilities and enlarge peoples' choices. The UNESCO (2002) defined TVET as the education and training to acquire the practical skills know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation, trade or group of occupations or trades. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) defines Technical and Vocational Education as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the education process involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related science and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sector's of economic and social life.

Rashtriya (2005) defines Technical Education alone as the education designed at upper secondary and lower tertiary levels to prepare middle levels personnel (technicians, middle management, e.t.c) and at University level to prepare engineers and technologist for higher management positions. Technical education includes general education, theoretical, scientific and technical studies and related skills. On the other hand he considers vocational education as the type of education designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower levels of qualification for one or a group of occupations, trades or jobs. Also vocational education and training (VET) is a way of preparing trainee for jobs that are based on manual or practical

activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to a specific trade occupation or vocation (Wolf, 2002).

According to Usman and Pascal (2010) TVET prepares learners for specific jobs or types of work, often including practical and/or procedural activities. The aim of TVET is to enable learners to meet needs of employers for qualified labour and/or own needs related to production of goods and services. The fact remains that no Nation can rise or progress without technical and vocational skilled work force, as such, the acquisition of vocational and Technical education skills constitutes the platform on which the drive for youth empowerment can be established in Nigeria.

Looking at Youth perspective, it is a period when one is at the apex of one's physical strength. It is a stage in life between childhood and full adulthood. Youths are at the stage of life when they undergo significant changes in their physical, emotional and social make up. Indeed, it is a period in life characterized by excesses and can be fraught with feelings of rebellion, anxiety, confusion and naivety (Okwubunka, 1994). Conceptually, the Youths play a vital function in the society. The youths are used as good farm hand having plenty of energy to work. They also played protective functions for society. When there is a conflict between one community and the other, youths are engaged to ward off their enemies, in terms of entertainment, the youths are also involved. The Elders watch the youths dance vigorously to various dance steps, wrestling, singing among others. The boys follow their fathers to learn how to hunt for animals, fish, collect herbs, weaving (baskets, mats, cloth, hats, foot mats among others). Girls receive training from their mothers on how to be good wives.

On the other hand Youth Empowerment according to Bush and Folger (1994) is the restoration of an individual's sense of his/her own values, strength, as well as his/her own capacity to handle life's problems. Empowerment can also be conceived in terms of processes through which disenfranchised social groups work to change their social surroundings or change detrimental policies and structures and work to fulfill their needs (Youth Empowerment Mission YEM, 2005). In this regard empowerment as a process is mostly ongoing and continues to evolve from strength to strength. It can be achieved through education, networking and organization. Examples of employment programmes to support the youths include: Subsidy Re-investment Employment Programme (Sure-P) organized by current administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, National Directorate of employment (NDE) programme by Babangida administration, Niger-Delta Development Commission's (NDDC) empowerment programme, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) among other ones established by various state governors in Nigeria.

Despite all these initiatives, Nigerian youths are engaged in one form of criminal activities or the other. Currently youth unrest under the auspices of Boko Haram is on the rampage in North-Eastern Nigeria, destroying economic activities and killing innocent citizens. The question that borders the mind of many Nigerians is: Are the youths fully engaged in the government empowerment schemes? If they are, how beneficial are the schemes to the youths?

Originally, the direct preparation was the main goal of TVET, these remains prominent in many developing nations including Nigeria (Abubakar, 2010). Technical and Vocational educators use teaching approaches that is emphasizing vocational skills development and prepare students for certification and employment in formal sector. TVET programme at Technical college level are numerous, they include welding and fabrication, foundry craft practice; mechanical engineering craft practice; Automobile engineering practice; data processing; furniture making; carpentry and Joinery; electrical Installation and maintenance work among others, government could engage youths in any relevant one to keep them busy and beneficial to themselves and entire public.



### **The Role of TVET in Youth Empowerment**

The role of TVET in furnishing skills required to improve productivity, raise income levels and improve access to employment opportunities has been widely recognized (Bennell, 1999). Developments in the last three decades have made the role of TVET more decisive; the globalization process, technological change, and increased competition due to trade liberalization necessitates requirements of higher skills and productivity among workers in both modern sector firms and Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE). Skills development encompasses a broad range of core skills (entrepreneurial, communication, financial and leadership) so that individuals are equipped for productive activities and employment opportunities (wage employment, self-employment and income generation activities).

The success of TVET in any developing country can be considered a key indicator of the country's advancement in development. Any country that evolved into a technological advanced one, TVET must have played an active and vital role as skilled manpower would have been required, also to enable its sustainability (Usman & Pascal, 2010). TVET is a most effective means for society to develop its members' potentials to respond to the challenges of the future. The provision of relevant and appropriate skills which is the focus of TVET represents a significant element of the overall development pathway of the country. Skills development in all technical sectors takes on an increasingly important role in virtually all dialogue of national development. Section 7 sub-sections 46 of National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) listed out all range of courses in the technical colleges which covered various aspects of the economy, with better funding, management and supervision youths of this great country could be engaged to acquire all the necessary skills that will empower and transformed Nigerian society.

TVET institutions should therefore train youths in these needed skills area. Okoro (1994) opined that if Nigerian youths are empowered with the skills needed by the labour market, they will not have problem in entering the labour force because they possess the relevant skills in the job that exists in the society. TVET can provide training programmes directed at equipping the youths with specific occupational skills that are in great demand and develop in them right attitude to work, self-esteem and belief in the importance of the training they are receiving to themselves and to the society. TVET Institutions if empowered could establish evening or part-time courses for youths that have craft knowledge, in order to equip them with theoretical knowledge. In addition, extension courses could be extended to youths in the rural areas to enable them become productive in their chosen trade. This will stem the tide of rural-urban migration.

### **Challenges of TVET and its Implication on Youth Empowerment**

Technical and vocational education program has been facing a lot of challenges since its inception. However, at the moment there are several challenges facing technology education in Nigeria, which has not allowed it to take its rightful position in the pursuit of youth empowerment and industrial transformation in the country. These various challenges were highlighted in the work of Usman and Pascal (2010) these challenges are also peculiar to Nigeria situation, they include:

- The urgent challenge is therefore to bridge the demand for jobs with the actual needs of society. Politically, governments cannot afford not to invest in the skills of future generations.
- The Image and Status of TVET has consistently faced problems as it is perceived by some as second-class. These difficulties must be met with a renewed effort to raise the public perception of TVET.
- The Promotion of TVET for Girls and Women, this is essentially an issue of access to TVET and, once girls and women enter TVET institutions, how they are received

and accommodated. Attracting more female instructors and administrators into TVET is a major challenge in the future.

- TVET Facilities and Equipment: There is a major problem associated with high cost of construction, equipment, maintenance and the provision of consumable training materials. Routine and preventive maintenance have also constituted persistent problems.
- TVET Teachers' Conditions of Service in most countries are not the same with those in academics, as such, it serves as a demotivating factor.
- Workplace Health and Safety: HIV/AIDS upon youth and working-age populations is a major challenge to be faced by TVET. HIV/AIDS, the very educative process is in jeopardy.
- TVET Curriculum Reform and Development effect on labour market. In other nations, for a variety of reasons, employers prefer to employ untrained youth or academic graduates and provide on-the-job training. One salient trend is the growing convergence between TVET and academic curricula, resulting from technological change.
- Teaching and Learning: As TVET becomes increasingly more knowledge oriented; the role of the teachers and instructors must change from the didactic imparting of skills and knowledge to the facilitation of learning. Learners-centered.
- TVET Planning: In most cases where TVET programs fails, appropriate and relevant parties are not involved at the planning stage.
- Corruption: Most people restrict corruption to financial embezzlement. The worst aspect of it is related to policies that obscure TVET related programs which are capable of empowering the society with skills and competencies that could lead to standalones.

Looking at the challenges from entrepreneurship perspective African Union (2007) maintained that challenges, besetting the TVET sector are multi-dimensional and more colossal. According to the union they served as a roadblock to our quest for self reliance and national development. They include:

1. Most technical educators lack the methodology of teaching entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurship;
2. Technical and vocational educators use teaching approaches that emphasize technical and vocational skills and neglect creating an enterprise culture in their trainees;
3. Entrepreneurship is taught as separate course and is not integrated into the TVET programme.

All these have great implication on the youths towards their futures. If the afore mentioned challenges are taken care of, then the youths will become skilled and resourceful and productive for the nation, they can easily enter the labour forces and make progress in the chosen careers, and will help them survive amidst unemployment problems; and promotes self-reliance.

### **Impact of Technology on Youth Empowerment Programmes**

Today, many Nigerian scholars through robust technology information and researches have agreed upon the axiomatic fact that, the empowerment of individual in the field of work could be easily achieved through his knowledge of technical know-how (Olabiyi, Ologban & Okewo, 2004) Youths should be moulded early enough in favour of Technical and vocational education. This implies that the youths need to be guided through providing enabling environment (Technical colleges) where they could be kept busy on how to acquire the needed skill to empower them to secure a better future.

As in other facets of human endeavor, technology has made some significant impact on education, it is being widely applied today to satisfy man's endless quest for knowledge and meeting with their daily needs. Olabiyi et al (2004) observed that, the introduction of computer system has contributed immensely towards the development of the economy of a nation. Since computer craft practices has being included in the Technical colleges Trainings. It simply implies that more job opportunities have being opened up for the beneficiaries of the programmes such as engagement in saves, services and operation of computer sets, thereby contributing to the development of youths and the nation at large. Also the inclusion of Beauty culture trades into Technical College programmes will go a long way in directing youths towards getting their daily bread through the knowledge of beauty creativity such as cosmetology rather than embarking on debasing prostitution in hotels.

The effect of technology on various aspects of TVET programmes cannot be over emphasized, printed trades which include printing craft practice, graphic arts and ceramics can be carried out using modern computer graphics. Youths could be engaged in printing invitation cards, greeting cards, souvenirs and production of house hold ceramics using modern tools and technologically improved materials. Text trades according to the National Policy on Education include garment making (Ladies/Men dresses); textiles trades; dyeing and bleaching. Technology has brought modern dyeing methods that youths can take advantage of making fully them engaged providing for their daily needs and for others. Government of Nigeria can take advantage of this technologically improved system and environment to keep youths busy to curtail their engagement in criminal activities like Boko-Haram syndrome.

#### **Benefits of Youth Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria**

The youths of a nation are said to determine the future greatness of a nation (Garba, 1992). Therefore if Nigeria government will empower her youths through TVET programs and with functional education, it will raise the standards and quality of youths and make them fit for productive self or paid employment. Technical and vocational education is what the present and future youths need to be self reliant and job providers instead of job seekers. Olaitan (1996) describes technical and vocational education as a form of education which prepares individual for acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences needed by the (youths) individuals for a specified work and gives increased employability and higher job mobility.

TVET if properly administered to Nigerian youths, they will be empowered, reducing the involvement of youths in illegal and dangerous drug trafficking and trafficking of ladies for prostitution in some foreign countries with the support of some ill- gotten rich men called "God-father's. This will reduce the vices that are embarked upon on by the youths on daily bases. Rowaiye (2006) maintained that it is unemployment that forced people to resort to all kinds of various crimes likes stealing, robbery, pocket picking, breaking and entry into residential and commercial houses. As such if the youths are been empowered through TVET it will secure orderliness to the nation economy and maintain peace and security in Nigeria.

#### **Conclusion**

Nigeria youths need TVET education, this will empower the youths and promote self employment and peace in the county, and self employment is one of the main national objectives of Nigerian Development plan and endorsed as the necessary foundation for National development. TVET will empower youths by encouraging them to make use of their brains and hands to acquire suitable knowledge and skills to designs and to produce methods and process that will enable them to make maximum use of the resources for their benefit and benefit of the society. Therefore, there is urgent need to direct the consciousness of Nigerian,

youths towards being empowered with the technological skills obtainable at various Technical vocational education and training (TVET) centers in the country.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are necessary for the empowerment of the youth through Technical and vocational education and training (TVET):

1. The government should make adequate supply of learning materials and workshop facilities to TVET institutions to help in preparing the youth for self-employment.
2. Government programmes should prepare a wide range of opportunities for youth's employment for National Transformation.
3. Establishment and equipping of technology training institutions to empower the youths for self-reliance should be the focus of government.
4. There should be constitutional provisions for job creation and full employment of youths on a yearly basis in order to reduce unemployment.
5. Laws setting adequate wages for teachers and youths should be made and enforced
6. Good policies and effective implementation will encourage good entrepreneurs which will create wealth and job opportunities and bring down the rate of youth unemployment.
7. There should be policies that will promote TVET programmes which are capable of empowering the society with skills and competencies that could lead to youth empowerment for National transformation.
8. Government should create an avenue that will attract more female instructors and administrators to TVET institutions to encourage female youths in National transformation.
9. Curriculum TVET should be reviewed on regular basis to accommodate innovation and technological development.
10. Effort should be made by government to renew public perception of TVET not to be seen as second-class programme in order to attract to it for better youth empowerment.

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