

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING : THE ANTIDOTE FOR ALLEVIATING POVERTY AND ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY OF YOUTHS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Despite the rich mineral resources in Nigeria today, unemployment and poverty is increasing at a geometric rate and having devastating effect on less privileged masses. Over 60 percent of Nigerians continue to live in absolute poverty, unable to meet their most basic needs, and surviving on less than a dollar a day which is the World Bank's international poverty line for chronic poverty. The current poverty situation in Nigeria poses a threat to national, socio-economic and technological development in all ramifications. This has given birth to various brands of crimes in our nation especially among the youths and the unemployed who are the worst hit. This paper through extensive literature review, discussed critically and analytically under the following sub-topics: overview of poverty in Nigeria, poverty profile of Nigeria, government effort towards poverty alleviation, role of Vocational Education in poverty alleviation, and a number of recommendations necessary for effective utilization of Technical and Vocational Education and Training as a necessity for alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

Keywords: Technical and Vocational Education and Training, antidote, poverty, poverty alleviation employability.

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is the foundation of national and industrial development in all ramifications. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a type of education whose major objective is to prepare individuals for employment in chosen occupations by equipping them with the vocational skills, knowledge and attitude necessary for employment. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN)(2013) defined Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 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. Okoro (2006) defined TVET as any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations.

TVET is a form of education designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed by a person to enter and make progress in self or paid employment on a useful and productive basis. Technical Vocational Education and Training gives individual the skills to live, learn and work as productive citizen. It reduces the over dependence of graduates on government for employment.

TVET is offered in Technical colleges, polytechnics, monotronics, and colleges of technology, among others. Technical colleges are regarded as one of the principal TVET institution in Nigeria for the training of craftsmen and women. The scope of TVET encompasses such broad classification as agricultural education, business education, fine and applied arts education, home economics education, nursing education, health technology education, industrial technical education and industrial technology education among others. Examples of vocational training and technical education programmes includes among others those offered at trade centers, technical colleges, monotronics, polytechnics, colleges of technology, colleges of education (technical) and universities among others.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) revealed that the goals of TVET shall be to: provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical level; provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically. According to FRN (2013), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is further understood to be: an integral part of general education; a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world

of work; an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship; an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development; and a method of alleviating poverty. Olaitan, Ali, Onyemachi and Nwachukwu (2000) defined poverty is the inability of individuals, groups or society to provide for their basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, basic education among others. While poverty alleviation according to Hornby (2014) is to reduce economic and financial hardship to bearable level and improve human welfare. Since TVET equip learners with occupational skills, it enhances learners' employability in paid employment in the industries and also give them the skills required to practice their trade and become self reliance.

The Federal Government in realization of the role of TVET in poverty alleviation mapped out the following goals for TVET colleges. FRN (2013) stated that trainees completing technical college programmes shall have three options:- secure employment either at the end of the whole course or after completing one or more modules of employable skills; set up their own business and become self-employed and be able to employ others; and pursue further education in advance craft/technical programme and in post-secondary (tertiary) technical institution such as Science and Technical colleges, polytechnics, college of technology, colleges of education, monotechnic and universities. Beside the national objectives, the central goal of

TVET is to produce technical manpower to meet the needs of the industry and enhance industrial development in Nigeria.

TVET is considered the antidote for industrial development, employability and poverty alleviation in Nigeria because the expansive development experienced in China, India, Japan, USA, USSR and other technologically advanced nations is as a result of adequate investment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. TVET provides the antidote or remedy to skill deficiency and equip learners with the required occupational skills, enhances learners' employability in paid employment in the industries and also give them the skills required to practice their trade and become self reliance. Researchers, scholars and administrators alike have revealed that without adequate investment in Nigeria's TVET programmes; the national development objectives could be difficult to attain and the resultant effect will sink the nation in the mud of abject poverty. Olaitan, Ali, Onyemachi and Nwachukwu (2000) identified TVET as the only potent tool and most powerful weapon to fight poverty in the 21st century. This rich objectives of Federal governments cannot be achieve in Nigeria in the absence of functional and efficient TVET programmes which is a major avenue for producing skilled individuals that will be enterprising, resourceful and competent enough to be able to succeed in self or paid employment to alleviate poverty; which is an enemy of man and humiliates and dehumanizes its victim. This study therefore carried out an

overview of Technical and Vocational Education and Training: a sine qua non for alleviating poverty in Nigeria

An Overview of Poverty in Nigeria

Poverty is a condition of being poor or unproductive. Poverty was defined by Olaitan *et al* (2000) as the scarcity of human basic needs, or the inability of an individual, groups or society to acquire human basic needs for existence. In this context, poverty could affect an individual or groups or society or community or nation. It can also be referred to as a condition in which a person or group of persons are unable to satisfy their most basic and elementary requirements for human survival in terms of good nutrition, clothing, shelter, health, education, recreation among others. To the layman, it simply refers to members of the society who cannot afford their three square meals in a day. Obaseki (1997), opined that poverty is a ravaging economic and social phenomenon that manifests in the inability to acquire the basic necessities of life needed for a decent living, in love, self-esteem and in the absence of the means of self-actualization.

According to Nwachukwu (2000) poverty has two dimensions, rural poverty and urban poverty. Rural poverty is the poverty that affects rural dwellers while urban poverty is the dimension of poverty that affects urban dwellers. Poverty is also in various types based on what produces it, like: intellectual poverty, economic

poverty, political poverty, technological poverty, social poverty and managerial poverty. Intellectual poverty is the poverty resulting from the inability of individuals to make use of their intellectual abilities for active participation in society. Economic poverty is the one resulting from the inability of government to provide enabling environment and policies to boost productive activities. Political poverty involves the government inability to continue empowerment of citizens in a transparent democracy. Technological poverty is the poverty resulting from the practice of using obsolete technology, which gives rise to low productivity. Social poverty is the development that does not involve active participation of the people in decisions that affect their lives while managerial poverty is the poverty resulting from lack of tactful management and strategic control of mission and vision statements of organizations.

Ajah (2013) adduced from Nigerians three levels poverty. One, there are those who are poor but do not believe that they are so. For this group, they struggle – sometimes by all means possible to find ways of keeping their bodies and souls together. They include: those begging on the streets, those unable to feed thrice a day with good meals, those unable to cater for their own children in terms of education, health and shelter, and those languishing in the prisons for trivial offences. Two, they are those who are not poor but they believe that they are equal

to the poor. This group is made up of the insatiable minds that will refuse to pay a labourer his paltry reward upon the abundance they swim in. They compete to be the greatest in wealth amassment which arithmetically translates to impoverishing more Nigerians. One of such may be gathering the fortunes of a quarter of the entire population of Nigeria. They are not limited to: some politicians, including political prostitutes and sycophants, some businessmen and women, hardened criminals involving in bank robbery, pen robbery, 419, arms smuggling, kidnapping and bunkering. And three, there are those who are neither rich nor poor and they believe in what they are. This category constitutes an insignificant number of the Nigerian population.

The main causes of poverty in Nigeria are unemployment, ignorance, poor governance, corruption, high inflation, environmental degradation, high population growth, among others. Specifically, in rural areas, where 85 per cent of Nigeria's poor reside, the major cause of poverty has been identified as the use of outdated and inefficient systems in agriculture and craft. Other contributory factors to low income in rural areas, according to Abubakar (2005), include inadequate infrastructure, lack of credit and marketing facilities, unfavourable rural institutions especially in respect of land tenure; ignorance; illiteracy and cultural and institutional rigidities. Williams

(1984) has also identified lack of viable non-farm employment opportunities in the rural sector thereby leading to overcrowding on the land and under-employment of labour. It should be added that even though alternative occupations like traditional crafts and petty trading do exist in most villages, yet investigations have shown that incomes realized from these occupations are as low as those realized from farming. While in urban areas poverty is caused by overpopulation on the limited opportunities and facilities due to excess rural-urban drift in pursuit of greener pasture.

Indeed, poverty is really a big challenge in Nigeria because there can be no hiding the fact, that a hungry man is an angry man. It has led many Nigerians to attach no value and regard to life itself. Poverty has numerous devastating effects such as high rate of open and secret prostitution, exposure to risks like corruption, robbery, street life, increased unemployment, malnutrition, low level of education, low income per capital, human degradation, living in overcrowded home with poor ventilation, free living fraud (419), migration and high infant mortality. Poverty indicators are always severe on the poor people. It includes: short life expectancy due to malnutrition, and near starvation, sickness, health and mental defects, less education and less opportunities for development, and therefore less protection from hazards and

danger. It leads to increase in the number of poor people in the society.

Uniamikogbo (1997) identified the poor as: those who are unable to contribute adequately to the production process to warrant an income, those for whom the economy has failed to provide jobs, that is, those who are willing and capable of earning an adequate income if only jobs were available and those whose opportunities to participate in the productive process were restricted by discrimination of various kinds, for example, sex, age, race, religion and among others. It should also be noted that, though some people are rich while others are poor, yet the concept of poverty is a relative term, because a first class rich man in a particular place maybe poorer than a third class rich man in another place. Despite the fact that poverty is a relative term, economists have devised a means of identifying the status of absolute poverty. This is defined in terms of the number of people living below specified minimum level of income (imaginary international poverty line) which cuts across all countries regardless of the level of national per-capita income (Agbionu, 2002).

Countries like America (USA), Germany, India, China, Soviet Union (USSR) ,and several other European nations are currently involve in massive vocational education and training programmes geared towards equipping individuals with

requisite skills necessary to alleviate poverty and hunger. Some of these countries have used vocational education in the past to expand their economy technologically and economically and has greatly reduced poverty to an appreciable level. These nations have massively invested in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to pave way for economic survival while Nigeria is still producing graduates without requisite skills for employment and self-reliance. There are various clogs in the wheel of TVET achievement in Nigeria. There is the need for total separation of general education from TVET; in that the population of TVET educators is very few which hinders their candid view in decision making.

As a result of this, TVET benefits little from unfathomed resources appropriated to general education. Moreover, most of our institutions running TVET courses do not have reliable learning workshops as they are equipped with conventional machines which are not in line with the trend of development and the ones they will be exposed to in the standing manufacturing companies in Nigeria. Graduates lack the requisite skills today as a result of inadequate funding of TVET because instructors, technicians and craftsmen that posses the dexterity of industrial technical arts are not available in the schools due to poor remuneration caused by poor funding of the education sector and poor attitude of government towards Vocational Education

in Nigeria.

Poverty Profile of Nigeria

Poverty in Nigeria was first measured in 1980 by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), when 27.2 per cent of the population, or 18 million people, were classified as poor. By 1985, the Federal Office of Statistics estimated that about 46 per cent of Nigerians live below poverty level but it dropped to 43 per cent by 1992. This rate surged to 66 per cent in a 1996 survey and the total number of poor nearly quadrupled, to 67 million (UNDP 1986). Estimates put the poverty rate today at close to 70 per cent, or 90 million people. Perhaps 40 per cent of these people are the "core poor", so impoverished that they cannot meet their basic food needs, and indeed, the stunting rate for young Nigerian children, a measure of chronic nutritional deprivation and food insecurity, stands at 42 per cent (FOS, 2007).

The nature of poverty in Nigeria appears to be more concentrated in the rural than in the urban areas of the country. The number of rural poor, according to the 1999 World Bank Report, is roughly twice that of the urban poor. Of the extremely poor, 85 per cent live in the rural areas and more than two-thirds lived on farms. The distribution of poverty is also inequitable on a geographic basis. Regionally the North-West geopolitical zone has the largest proportion of its population living in poverty, and the three northern geo-political

zones have 65 per cent of the nation's population but account for only 35 per cent of GDP. The 1997 National Consumer Survey indicated that the average family expenditure per month for the country was N4,058.00. Out the country's six geopolitical zones, the North West zone had the least figure N2,941. The Eastern zone had the highest figure of N5,194.00, almost double the figure for the North-West zone.

Also, the North West zone recorded the lowest figure of household income (N3,769), while the highest figure of N7,213 came from the South Eastern zone. The level of poverty in the zone is striking indeed. About 54.2 per cent of the inhabitants of the zone live below the poverty line. The North-West came second only to North-east which recorded 55.8 per cent on the poverty scale (World Bank, 2001). No part of the country is exempt from poverty, however, and severe poverty is also experienced in the Southern regions. Lack of formal education, large household size, living in a rural area and pursuing an agricultural livelihood are strongly associated with poverty.

Government Effort towards Poverty Alleviation

Successive governments in Nigeria both military and civilian since independence has in the past under various programmes tried something towards poverty alleviation to empower and improve the standard of living of the general populace. Some of

these programmes include the introduction of the National Youth Service Corp Scheme (NYSC) in 1973 which has some cushioning effect on the immediate unemployment problems of fresh graduates. The other programmes introduced at one time or the other by the past administrations includes Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). This was introduced in the late seventies by the Obasanjo Administration, Green Revolution, by the Shagari Administration in the early eighties. The Structural Adjustment program (SAP), Mass Mobilization Scheme for Economic Recovery, Better Life Programme for Rural Women and others were introduced by the Babangida Administration between the mid eighties and early nineties. Abacha like others introduced Family Support Programme and most recently the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) which came into existence in the wake of 2000. Despite the introduction of these programmes, poverty has neither ceased nor abated.

Using poverty indicators such as literacy level, access to safe water, nutrition, infant and maternal mortality, and the number of people living on less than \$1 a day, Nigeria is found to rank among the 25 poorest nations in the world below Kenya, Ghana and Zambia (World Bank, 2002). This is in spite of all the efforts and resources devoted for many years to fighting poverty by successive governments in Nigeria, with

the support of richer nations and international development institutions. This unsatisfactory results call for a re-examination of policies and practices of poverty eradication in Nigeria.

Role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Poverty Alleviation

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been recognized all over the world as a tool for alleviating poverty and enhancing technological development due to its emphasis on skill acquisition and skill development (World Bank, 1996). Skill training enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy. Worldwide, countries are renewing efforts to promote TVET because it is the only way to prepare young people for the world of work, and reach out to the marginalized and excluded groups to engage them in income generating activities. Today in Nigeria, the high incidence of school dropout among secondary school students clearly highlights the importance of career development, which is achievable through Vocational training in TVET. The students that cannot fit into the academic-oriented curriculum would need practical skills to enable them to be functional in the society.

Moreover, graduates of existing school system invariably enter the job market seeking employment that hardly exists. With a population over 150 million people

and an average annual growth of 28%, most of the citizens are surviving on less than one dollar a day as calculated to be 72%, with a poverty gap of 34.9% when the scope is extended to less than two dollars a day; 90.8% of the population is categorized as being poor (Federal Office of Statistics, 2007). The role of TVET in poverty alleviation cannot be underestimated because it is a major enabler of technological development through skill acquisition, job creation and wealth generation. It is the only form of education that equips individuals with requisite vocation skills and technical knowledge in various occupations necessary for self-reliance. It will help to empower people technically, technologically and economically. It helps its graduate to have sustainable income that will meet their needs. Through TVET, a framework for poverty alleviation can be laid.

Although TVET is a marginalized enterprise surviving the personal interest of a relatively few people in Nigeria. It is also yet an essential component of any national policy for coping with pressure of change and improving the quality of life of its people. It is also to help design a way forward for government. However, since it is the desire of present Nigeria government to make this country to be among the 20 economically developed nations in the world by the year 2020, it then becomes imperative that new social economic and technological parameters be put in place in

which every employable citizen is gainfully employed. TVET can contribute to national development, skilled entrepreneurs, increase domestic product, encourage gross national income, alleviate poverty, lower unemployment and increase manpower development. It as well reduces to the barest minimum the incidence of armed robbery, kidnapping, hired assassination car-snatching, and other vices associated with idleness and absence of skills among the youths.

Conclusion

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is skilled-oriented and employment motivated, and it is very obvious that, in this era TVET is an indisputable means of reducing poverty in Nigeria. This can be achieved through the acquisition of the relevant vocational skills, technical knowledge and abilities required to enter and make progress either in paid employment or self-employment. However, the means of acquiring this skills, knowledge and abilities are either lacking or in short supply due to some inhibiting factors such as inadequate training facilities, poor remuneration and motivation of TVET staff, corruption and misappropriation of TVET funds as well as inconsistency in the review of the TVET curriculum to reflect the needs and realities of modern work environment. However, these problems can be transformed to better opportunities if governments and other stakeholders develop a frame work to

further widen the prospects and ensure effective implementation of a functional Technical and Vocational Education and Training which is a necessity for alleviating poverty in Nigeria in this 21st century.

Suggestions

The following approaches are suggested to help in the reduction of poverty through Technical and Vocational Education and Training:

1. Vocational guidance services should be made compulsory and provided for, at all levels of vocational training to help the youth in making realistic career choices. Where this service is available, emphasis should be made on the effective and proper utilization of it.
2. TVET teachers should improve communication and awareness about vocational education programmes with in schools and between schools. Parents and the business community should be acquainted with what TVET is all about.
3. Government and other stakeholders should invest heavily in the provision of modern facilities for vocational training. This will go a long way in improving the quality of graduates produced thereby reducing unemployment.
4. Workable training policy that will influence the training and re-training of TVET teachers in the use of techniques and new tools, and facilities aided by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be developed.
5. The TVET curriculum at all levels of vocational training should be reviewed periodically to meet the current needs of the business world. The introduction of the entrepreneurship course at all levels of education is timely and should not be abused.
6. There is the need for Federal and state governments to work collaboratively with industries for the development of our TVET institutions for turning out high quality and self-reliant graduates that can contribute positively to the development of Nigeria's economy.
7. Also, there must be knowledge transfer between industrial and TVET experts to ensure successful implementation of a functional TVET which is a necessity for alleviating poverty in Niger state and Nigeria generally.

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