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TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) IN NIGERIA: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

This paper examined the historical development of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Nigeria. In the process, it examined the challenges and prospects of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the country with a view to determining the extent of achievement so far recorded and what else needs to be done to improve the fortunes of TVET in Nigerian schools. This is because technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a necessity for the socio-economic and political development of individuals and nations. The effective provision and implementation of TVET would determine effective realization of the objectives of the provision; whereas inadequate provision and ineffective implementation would not. Thus the study adopted the historical research method to analyze in historical perspective, the trends of development of TVET since 1856, when the first vocational school in Nigeria was established, challenges in the provision of TVET, and the prospects of actualizing its objectives. The paper uses historical analysis to analyze the issues and challenges of TVET and in considering the prospects for national development in the 21st century. It was found that in spite of its enormous resources, Nigeria has not enjoyed robust implementation of TVET despite its determination to do so. This could be attributed to the high level of corruption in the socio-political fabric of the nation. The paper recommends that Nigerian government should be more dedicated in financing TVET with a view to ensuring realistic socio-economic and political development of the country.

Keywords: Historical Development, Technical Education, Vocational Education, Challenges, Prospects, Historical Research.

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was in existence in Nigeria before the introduction of western education by the Christian missionaries. This is because the aim of education in the indigenous Nigerian society was character training and job orientation, closely woven around technical and vocational education and training (Okolocha, 2012). With a view to ensuring adequate job orientation, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in ancient times was based on the apprenticeship system, in which case, the individual trainee acquired practical skills from the master trainer. During the British colonial period, the indigenous people also learnt and acquired skills such as carpentry, carving, gardening and knitting, among others (David, 2014).

The 1969 National Curriculum Conference made a radical departure from the British oriented policy which gave birth to the first National Policy on Education in 1977. This policy eventually ushered in the American model 6-3-3-4, now being practiced as the 9-3-4 system of education in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education was reviewed in 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2013. It is important to note that in the policy (i.e. NPE), the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curriculum in Nigeria has three components, including: General Education, Trade and Trade related courses. At the secondary school level, the subjects are regarded as pre-vocational and academic, while students who are willing to continue with the courses could proceed to the senior secondary school level or technical colleges for specific areas of technical and vocational skills (Lawal, 2012).

In the contemporary Nigerian society, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has become increasingly important not only for the individual, but for the society at large. Consequently, section one, sub-section 7 (d) of the National Policy on Education (revised, 2013) stated that one of the national goals of education is majorly; the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in, and to contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2013). The rapid technological transformation of the 21st century undoubtedly poses serious challenges to education and employment sectors. This is because the new labour requirements have caused many graduates of various institutions of learning to be unemployed.

It is interesting to note, that Nigeria's National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) is supportive of TVET, because its thrust emphasizes the need to inculcate in learners, practical and applied skills, as well as the basic scientific knowledge capable of making them functional and useful members of the society. In order to make the policy thrust real, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Education has embarked on measures aimed at making TVET a positive change agent for the

nation's socio-economic, technological and national development (Abolade, 2016).

This paper therefore, attempts to explain the term Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), analyses the historical development of TVET in Nigeria, highlights some issues and challenges of TVET delivery and prospects for development of the Nigerian nation in the 21st century.

Concept of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) does not lend itself to a particular definition. This is because the confusion surrounding the meaning can be attributed to the various interpretations attached to the concept. To this end, there are as many definitions of TVET as there are authors, scholars and authorities.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Labour Organization (UNESCO and ILO 2002) defined TVET as that form of education designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower levels of qualification for one or a group of occupations, trades or jobs. It is an education which begins with a broad base and facilitates horizontal and vertical articulation within the education system and between school and the world of work, thus contributing to the elimination of all forms of discrimination. It also prepares the individual for lifelong learning of developing the necessary mental tools, technical as well as entrepreneurial skills and attitudes.

The Federal Government of Nigeria, through its National Policy on Education (2013) defines 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. The goals of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria shall be to:

- a. provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels;
- b. provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development and;
- c. give training and impart the necessary skills to individual for self-reliance economically (FRN, 2013).

From the above, it is pertinent to note that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) comprises all more or less organized or structured activities aimed at providing individuals with the knowledge, skills and competencies required to perform a job or a set of jobs whether or not they lead to a formal qualification. Thus, TVET ensures practical skill acquisition, a pre-requisite to gainful employment, leading to sustainable national development.

Major Development in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria

The traditional or indigenous education in Nigerian societies, through its apprenticeship (i.e. job orientation) system, provided some forms of technical and vocational education to the people. This earliest attempt was subsequently formalized by the early Christian missionaries who pioneered western education and introduced farming, bricklaying and carpentry as part of the school curriculum (David, 2014). However, this programme could not be sustained for long because those skills were not seriously regarded by both the learners and their parents.

A remarkable trend in the historical development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria was the establishment of the first vocational school in Nigeria, Blaize Memorial Industrial School Abeokuta, in 1856 by some Nigerians and West Indians; in 1875, the first technical school in Nigeria was established in Topo, near Badagry. This was followed by the establishment of Hope Waddell Training Institute, Calabar by the CMS in 1885, then the establishment of Ogugumanga Industrial Institute, Bonny, in 1903, and the Nasarawa School in 1909 (Ladipo, et al, 2013). The establishment of these institutions marked a turning point in the history of TVET in Nigeria. Each of these schools had a technical wing attached to it. For example, the Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar offered courses in carpentry and tailoring among other crafts; while the Nasarawa school technical section offered courses in leather works, carpentry, smithing and weaving (Fafunwa, 1974, Kosemani and Okorosaye – Orubite, 2002).

The policy statement on Education of 1925 also helped to encourage the image of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria. Through the policy, Government was invited to be more actively involved in the provision of technical and vocational education which required expensive equipment and qualified personnel. Consequently, the Nigerian Government established some trade and training centres as well as technical institutions in the country (Fafunwa, 1974; Abolade, 2016).

In the year 1932, the first higher institution of learning with technical bias in Nigeria was established at Yaba. In 1952, three colleges of Arts, Science and Technology were established in Zaria, Ibadan and Enugu. However, the colleges recorded low enrolment figures due to the general notion that technical education was inferior to other types of education. These colleges were subsequently closed down in 1962 and had their assets taken over by the first generation universities of Ife, Zaria and Nsukka (Lawal, 2012). It is important to note that during this period (i.e. early 1960s to early 1970s), little efforts were made to encourage technical and vocational education in the country. For instance, in the then northern region of Nigeria, there were only three trade centres located at Kaduna, Bukuru and Kano. In the 1970s, more universities, polytechnics and colleges of technology were established, but most of

them were not technical oriented as they offered courses in liberal arts, languages and social sciences (Lawal and Ojajuni, 2011).

The period 1980-1983, witnessed the establishment of specialized technical institutions, in the form of Federal Universities of Technology to cater for the provision of high level manpower training in science and technology related areas. These universities were underfunded so, they had inadequate facilities and as such, could not fulfill their mandate. They were subsequently merged with bigger ones by the Buhari/Idiagbon regime in 1984. Although, the autonomous status of each of these institutions was restored between 1988 and 1991, very little progress was recorded in the area of technological development in Nigeria (Lawal, 2012). Also, during this period, two of these universities were renamed Universities of Agriculture (Makurdi and Abeokuta) and another one was established at Umudike, Umuahia (Lawal and Ojajuni, 2011).

Since 1990s, there has been tremendous development of technical and vocational institutions in Nigeria in terms of infrastructure, course contents and number of available technical colleges, monotechnics, polytechnics and universities of technology (Abolade, 2016). Available records have also shown remarkable expansion in various Faculties of Engineering and Technology in other conventional universities (Abolade, 2016). Encouragement has also been given to the teaching and learning of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Nigerian school system. The onus now lies on government (at all levels) to live up to the responsibility of adequately funding and equipping these institutions with a view to achieving their set goals and objectives.

Issues and Challenges of TVET in Nigeria

This part of the paper examines briefly, some issues and challenges of quality TVET provision and implementation in Nigeria. This is because institutional implementation of TVET has been observed to be unimpressive, far from being able to achieve its set objectives as provided for in the National Policy on Education. Such issues and challenges identified as constituting impediments to the development of TVET in Nigeria include among others, the following:

- 1. Negative Perception:** Technical and vocational education in Nigeria has for long, been suffering from erroneous perception and low awareness of its role and importance (Abolade, 2016). During the formative years of Western education the orientation or impression of Nigerians was that vocational and industrial schools were meant for slaves and reformatory purpose. Kosemani and Okorosaye – Orubite (2002: 228) affirmed the above view as follows:

Even the Bonny and Opobo chiefs who contributed towards the establishment of the Ogugumanga Industrial Institute, Bonny, did not send their children to the school, rather they sent their slaves.

In spite of its crucial place in the 21st century, TVET is yet to be accorded much respect. It continues to be perceived and treated by many Nigerian parents, students and other stakeholders as an option for the disadvantaged, drop-out and learners who are not academically brilliant (Abolade, 2016).

2. **Shortage of Qualified TVET Teachers:** Nigeria, in her policy statement places great emphasis on TVET as a potent tool for national development. However, the nation's TVET institutions obviously lack adequately qualified and well-motivated manpower to sustain the aspiration. For example, Nwosu (1992) lamented that though, technical colleges were established by both the Federal and State Governments, vocational training centres, polytechnics and similar institutions established by governments, individuals and organizations in all states, yet there is acute shortage of qualified technical education teachers in the country. David (2014) opined that the absence of commensurate incentives to motivate and retain technical education teachers poses a serious threat to effective delivery of TVET in the country.
3. **Inadequate Funding:** The inability of Government (at all levels) to allocate sufficient fund to TVET has continued to constitute serious impediments to the attainment of the nation's stated aims and objectives of TVET. To worsen the situation is irregular supply of electricity which does not augur well for the full realization of the objectives of TVET as well as industrial and national development (Ejike, 1990; Lawal, 2012).
4. **Poor Curriculum Implementation:** There has been poor curriculum implementation of TVET at both institutional and policy levels in Nigeria. Okolocha (2012) stated that the inability of schools to translate curriculum to practical realities remains a common challenge across the three levels of education in Nigeria. This, according to him, breeds a demand and supply mismatch. Abolade (2016) corroborated this by observing that many graduates of TVET with attractive qualifications in Nigeria remain unfit in the industries because the quality of practical know – how obtained in school is not suitable enough to qualify them for jobs in the nation's industrial sector.

Similarly, institutional implementation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been observed to be amazingly low, and very far from the set objectives of TVET as provided for in the National Policy on Education. According to Olaitan (1996), the low level of effectiveness of technical and vocational education in Nigeria was caused by lack of co-ordination of the programmes, inadequate facilities for learning, and programmes are not quite job-oriented. Ladipo et al (2013) opined that the effectiveness of an education is adjudged by its impact on macro-economic data, but the impacts of TVET are not felt, as social indicators on the high waves of insecurity, unemployment and poverty have not subsided. This critical challenge runs

contrary to the stated objectives of TVET and consequently, the attainment of robust national development.

Prospects of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for Nigerian National Development in the 21st Century

Technical and vocational education and Training (TVET) undoubtedly remains a potent tool for overall development of nations across the world. Thus, its place in harnessing resources for individual and national development is very crucial as the prevailing global trend requires the training of people for optimal performance.

Commenting on the prospects of TVET for national development, Mills (1980) opined that training is essential in this technological age for proper industrial development at all levels. Similarly, the primary objective of TVET is to prepare individuals for employment in recognized vocations or careers for nation building (Okorie, 2001 ;David,2014). Thus, the benefit of technical and vocational education lies in its job-creation role in the economy.

The Government of Nigeria, through the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) is disposed to the acquisition of appropriate skills and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and to contribute to societal growth. The implication of this for national development in Nigeria is that the effectiveness of its TVET programmes should henceforth, not be determined by the number of existing institutions for that purpose, but rather, by the extent at which trained beneficiaries are able to apply the acquired skills and knowledge to promote employability and responsibility (Abolade, 2016).

Conclusion

It has been observed that prior to the introduction of western education in Nigeria by the missionaries, technical and vocational education had been in existence. It was subsequently encouraged (to some extent), by the Europeans with the establishment of industrial and technical schools. The Government of Nigeria, through the National Policy on Education 1977 (revised, 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2013) gave fillip to TVET with a view to placing the nation on a high pedestal in technological and industrial development.

In conclusion, it is obvious that Nigerian Government has considered TVET as a relevant tool for equipping and engaging the youth in productive means of livelihood. However, TVET could not be said to have enjoyed robust implementation in Nigeria. This is because, there is the prevalence of poverty, insecurity, hunger, militancy and other malaise which have been making it difficult for the nation to harness the full potential of its citizens.

Recommendations

In order for Nigeria to develop realistically in the field of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), it is recommended that:

- i. Nigerians (i.e. parents, learners and other stakeholders) should change their age- long negative perception of TVET as being meant for the disadvantaged or less brilliant students. Thus, Nigerian youths should be encouraged to study technical and vocational education.
- ii. Technical and vocational institutions should be closely monitored by concerned government agencies for strict adherence to the aims and objectives guiding their existence. Unnecessary diversifications should be discouraged.
- iii. Government at all levels, as well as corporate bodies and private individuals are encouraged to ensure adequate funding of technical and vocational institutions. This is with a view to producing adequately qualified technicians, technologists and engineers for realistic technological and socio-economic development of the Nigerian nation.

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