

PROSPECTS OF TVET: TOWARDS ADDRESSING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

It has been noted that TVET provides the needed employable skills and attitudes required for job performance at the workplace. It can be perceived that the world of TVET constitutes technical education and vocational education. Technical education is defined as a formal training that enables the application of the techniques of applied sciences and mathematical principles for the services of mankind; whereas vocational education is the educational preparations and training provided to individuals to enable them become specifically qualified for a particular vocation. Okoye and Okwelle (2014) argued that while technical education is aimed at nurturing skills and practical development of an individual, vocational education is imbued with strict adherence to guiding principles for effective professional performance in an occupational field.

TVET therefore is defined by UNESCO as 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 occupation in various sectors of economic life". Technical and Vocational education according to Osuala (1981), is a form of education that includes preparation for employment in any industry for

specialized education for which there is societal needs and which can be most appropriately be acquired in schools. TVET thus equips people not only with vocational skills, but with a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are now recognized as indispensable for meaningful participation in work and life. It is an education designed to develop specific occupational skills (Butterfield, 2010). It goes to say that the primary objective of TVET is prepare students in a manner that enables them acquire the necessary skills for paid or self employment in a specific occupation; and so has been acclaimed the best to provide employment to economically challenged youths worldwide particularly the Nigerian youths.

Youths is defined by the National Policy on Youth Development, is any individual who is a citizen of Federal Republic of Nigeria between the ages of 18-35. These young adult constitute the bulk of workforce in any economy. In the Nigerian context for example, youths make up two thirds of the Nigerian population. These young people are faced with numerous challenges ranging from unemployment, extreme poverty and hunger. For example, these group of young and energetic people who constitute 80million out of the 140 million Nigerians (NPC, 2006), representing 60% of the total population of Nigerians with 64million (80%) of them unemployed while 1.6million are underemployed poses greater danger in terms of sustainability of the Nigerian economy. Furthermore, youth unemployment is seen to be highest among secondary school leavers (NBC, 2012) with less than half being able to proceed to higher education. Similarly, there is 40% unemployment rate among urban youths aged 20-24 and 31% among those aged 15-19 years thus leading to high rate of rural-urban migration occasioned by social vices such as youth restiveness, hooliganism, thuggery, rape, armed robbery just to mention but a few. Alhasan and Abdullahi (2013) argued that many of the Nigerian youths who drop out of

school together with those who manage to complete high school lack basic skills to compete in rather weak economy and tight labour market.

It therefore be argued that the Nigerian youths enroll in tertiary education programmes without due attention to the career prospects of courses they have chosen. Hence, upon graduation many become unemployed because the skills acquired are dysfunctional and irrelevant to the labour market (Okafor, 2011), thus giving rise to increase unemployment rate in Nigeria. No doubt unemployment has been blamed mainly on lack of relevant practical skills needed for paid or self-paid jobs, obsolete infrastructures, mismatch between the labour markets needs and the institutions needs, poor funding of education, misplaced priorities, prevailing curriculum not meeting the needs of the society among others.

Okoye & Okwelle (2014) posits that if youths are provided with adequate skills while in school and aided with entrepreneurial skills, youth unemployment would be a thing of the past. Thus, skill acquisition becomes one sure way of reducing country's high unemployment rate and grinding poverty. This recognition of TVET capacity in addressing manpower development of the youths demands that government give priority attention to TVET considering its capacity for accelerated poverty alleviation among the youths especially the physically challenged.

In furtherance to solving youth unemployment, UNESCO-UNEVOC outlined new TVET strategy for 2016-2021 with three key priority areas namely fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship; promoting equity and gender equality, and facilitating transition to green economies and sustainable societies (UNESCO, 2016). In line with UNESCO strategy for TVET, skills training and development of vocational and technical education programmes of Nigerian higher institutions through their skills acquisition programs offers a veritable tool for fostering youth employment and entrepreneurial skills. In recognition of the importance of

TVET in the present Nigerian economy, this paper therefore posits that skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development are indispensable in curbing rising youth unemployment.

TVET Programmes and Trade areas: the case University of Nigeria Nsukka

TVET provides wide area of specialized work skills for our youths to engage in and function optimally in economic development of the nation. In most TVET institutions and centres particularly at the University of Nigeria Nsukka UNSECO-UNEVOC Centre of the Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education offer five key programme areas for manpower training and development to her recipients namely Agricultural Education, Business Education, Computer Education, Home Economics Education and Industrial technical Education with several areas of specialization amidst several trade areas that students or trainees can focus on and acquires related skills needed to leapfrog in the labour market:

1. **Agricultural Education:** Poultry, crop production, fish pound production, snail rearing, farm machinery,
2. **Business Education:** Marketing, Advertising, Accounting, Office methods
3. **Computer Education:** Networking Hardware maintenance, software development, Multimedia development, Video editing, Graphics, Animations, web development, programming with trades including computer operations, word processing, data base management, PowerPoint presentations etc
4. **Home Economics:** Cosmetology, Clothing and Textile, Food and Nutrition, Home Management, Child care management
5. **Industrial Technical Education:** Wood work technology, electrical technology, electronics technology, auto mechanics technology, welding and fabrication, building

technology with numerous trade areas like glacier, plumbing and fittings, tiling, painting, carpentry and joinery, block molding, block laying, upholstery, furniture making tc

Career prospects for TVET scholars and practitioners

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) plays an essential role in improving the wellbeing of youths and society at large. It increases productivity, empowers individual to become self reliant and stimulates entrepreneurship in the practitioners. Hence, recipients of TVET are expected to function in diverse occupational areas present in our society namely:

- a. Vocational and Technical Teachers/instructors: Only professional i.e. trained technical and vocational experts are qualified to teach vocational and technical subjects in private and public accredited TVET institutions and by so doing eke out a living.
- b. Managerial Positions: Ideally it is expected that only technical and vocational careers experts will rise in the field to occupy such positions and provide improved leadership role in the administration and management of TVET in Nigeria.
- c. TVET provides career path for lecturers and researchers in diverse TVET programmes of study. Thus, such high profile jobs are quite rewarding to TVET practitioners.
- d. Entrepreneurs: TVET practitioners are fast becoming very successful business managers of Small and medium enterprises.
- e. TVET offers great opportunities for her recipients to become inventors and producers of various products and tools.
- f. Proprietors of Vocational Enterprise Centre
- g. TVET experts are found managing and heading several industries and institutions as: supervisors, heads of departments/Units, directors, ministers, and factory workers etc in

major industries like Chevron-Exxon Oil, Agip oil, Mobil oil companies as well as construction companies like Julius Berger, Arab Contractors and so on as 80% of industrial workers in these industries are mainly technicians, welders, electrical installations technicians, inventory and store keepers, carpenters, auto mechanics, electricians, vocational nurses etc. In all TVET hold greater promise for technical students, graduates and artisans who has acquired saleable work skills in a given trade area or a number of trade areas.

- h. Above all, TVET gives one unique image and identity both locally and internationally hence most TVET experts have become famous through their works and arts made in the process of serving mankind.

Conclusion/ Way Forward

TVET no doubt holds greater prospects for Nigerian youths particularly the informal sectors which is fast developing into the largest economy in Africa as is the case with information and communication technologies (ICTs). However, the prospects of TVET for sustainable economic development can be adequately achieved by ensuring that: TVET is more market driven, ensuring high standard TVET delivery to her recipients, ensuring the availability and affordability of TVET Institutions (Vocational Enterprise Institutes, Vocational Training Centres, Technical colleges etc) with a view to provide technical and vocational education and training that can meet the needs of the global society, increasing the funding allocated to TVET in a bid to equip the institutions with state-of-the art facilities and tools most needed in the 21st century for work skills development that meets the global standard.

Above all, the Nigerian Governments should strengthen the existing cooperation between the national and international bodies and keying into the UNESCO-UNEVOC agenda and global

TVET strategies for 2016-2021 to ensure the realization of these objectives. There is also need to encourage private sector participation by the government through the creation of enabling environment, providing free taxation for companies who engage in TVET training and development of the youths, and subsidizing training costs and apprenticeship wages for the Nigerian youths.

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