STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (TVE) PROGRAMME TO REDUCE UMEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) is geared towards the development of specific skills for economic and social challenges. Considering the high rate of unemployment of TVE Nigerian graduates especially the secondary school leavers and the university graduates, it becomes pertinent to critically examine the role of TVE and proffer strategies for its improvement towards ameliorating the situation. This study therefore ascertains the state of TVE in Nigeria, emerging challenges in TVE and proposed strategies towards enhancing the TVE programme in Nigeria for economic development. The study would be of benefit to the researchers and curriculum planners as it would contribute to literature and enhance the knowledge of the curriculum planners on the strategies to include when planning the curriculum to improve TVE programme in order to reduce the rate of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria.

Keywords: Economic development, Employment generation, Poverty reduction, Technical and Vocational Education (TVE).

Introduction

Nigeria is blessed with both human and non-human resources yet; the country is still battling with so many challenges such as unemployment, poverty, group agitations, among others. It is believed that if these resources are effectively utilized, Nigeria could witness economic and social advancement. Economic advancement speeds up in a country when people are meaningfully engaged in one occupation or the other and thereby provide goods or services for human satisfaction. On the other hand, economic development of a country usually crumbles when there is high rate of unemployment. Information from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that unemployment in Nigeria raised from 9.9 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2015 to 18.8 per cent in the fourth quarter 2017 as shown in figure 1.

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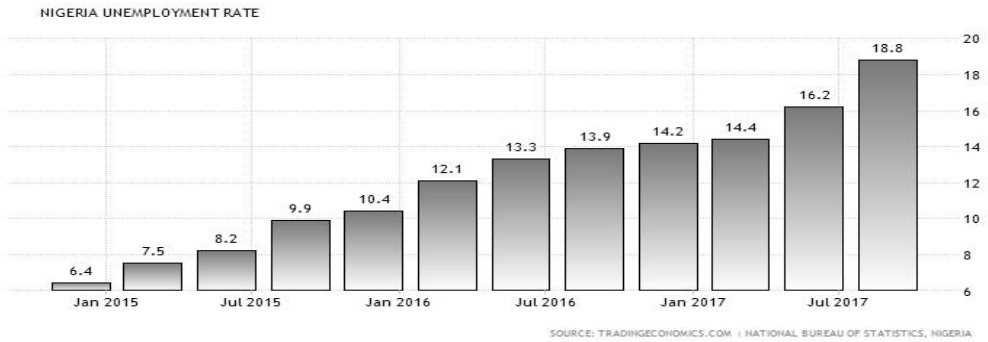

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria.

Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of unemployment rate in Nigeria from 2015-2017.

Unemployment is a situation where people who are able and are willing to work could not find or create job. Without the development of human potentials in any society, it might be difficult to fully harness other resources in the quest for economic and social development. The need to effectively harness the resources and expose the citizens to functional skills of social value for economic gain brought about the introduction of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) in education sector in Nigeria (Ekpenyong, 2011).

Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) is a form of education designed to equip the learners with necessary competencies for gainful employment. Jeerapattanatorn (2013) defined Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) as the education which aims to equip people with knowledge, skills and competencies required in particular occupations or more broadly in the labour market. According to Idris, and Mbudai (2016), Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) is described as the training given to individuals for the implementation of technological development of a nation. Based on the definitions above, it could be deduced that the important features of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) include among others, its orientation towards the world of work and the acquisition of employable and entrepreneurial skills for gainful employment. This is to say that TVE form of education is expected to provide its recipients with the competencies needed to be productive and enterprising so as to enhance sustainable economic growth. Considering the high rate of unemployment which brought about increase in poverty level, one wonders whether TVE as practiced in Nigeria has been able to fulfill its objective of equipping its recipients with the necessary competencies for gainful employment. This study therefore ascertained the state of TVE in Nigeria, its challenges and proposed strategies which could enhance the achievement of TVE objectives in order to reduce the rate of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria.

State of the Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) in Nigeria

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Historically, hands-on learning has been in practice in Nigeria (although in informal way) before the introduction of western education. Western education was brought to Nigeria with the advent of colonialism and their mission was to produce clerks, teachers and interpreters who could facilitate their trade (Iwuanyanwu, 2018). According to Fafunwa (1982), the first attempt to recognize technical education programme was its incorporation into the 1946 Ten Year Education Plan with the purpose of preparing students for entry-level jobs in occupations and to be productive members of the society. In 1982, the Nigerian education system witnessed the full implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education that emerged with variety of reforms (Ofoha, Uchegbu, Anyikwa & Nkemdirim, 2009). According to the authors, the reforms brought about the introduction of vocational subjects into the curriculum of secondary schools in Nigeria, this include the pre-vocational subjects to be offered at the junior secondary schools and the vocational subjects to be offered at the senior secondary schools. The main purpose of pre-vocational subjects at the junior secondary schools was to expose the students to various vocational areas for them to appreciate and develop interest to build future career in vocational and technical education specific areas. At the senior secondary level, TVE encompasses a wide range of areas of specialization which include but not limited to electrical engineering trade, applied electricity, electronics, mechanical engineering trade, auto mechanics, general metal work, civil engineering trade, building construction, wood work, home economics, business education, home management, food and nutrition, clothing and textiles.

Other trade subjects include: auto body repair and spray painting, auto parts merchandizing, welding and fabrication, electrical installation and maintenance work, Radio and TV servicing, electrical appliances repair, block/brick laying and concrete work, carpentry and joinery, furniture making, upholstery, garment making, textile trade, dyeing and bleaching, printing and photography trade, mining trade, transportation trade, beauty culture and cosmetology trade, tourism and hospitality trade, leather goods, manufacturing, keyboarding, shorthand, data processing, store keeping, book keeping and GSM maintenance (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009). The National Policy on Education emphasized that the TVE graduates from secondary school should be able to secure employment at the end of the whole course or after completing one or two modules of employable skills. Furthermore, that they should be able to set up their own businesses, become self-employed and employ others or pursue further education in advance craft in tertiary institutions such as polytechnics or colleges of education (technical) and universities.

At the tertiary level, Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) is an umbrella which covers so many units which include Agricultural Education Unit, Home Economics Unit, Business Education Unit which comprises Office Technology and Management (OTM) (formerly known as Secretarial Education), Accounting Education, Commerce and Cooperative Education, Computer Education and Distributive/Marketing Education. Another unit in TVE at the tertiary level is

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Industrial and Technology Unit which comprises Electrical, Mechanical, Building & Woodwork and Metal Work Education. Interested candidates who obtain up to the required scores are usually assigned into these units during admission.

Role of TVE in Nigeria

Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) was introduced into the education sector in Nigeria to produce craftsmen, master craftsmen and professionals (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009. Other objectives of TVE according to the policy include the following;

1. To provide courses of instruction and training in engineering, other technologies, applied science, business and management leading to the production of trained manpower.
2. To provide the technical knowledge and skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development of Nigeria.
3. To give training and impart the necessary skills for the production of technicians, technologists and other skilled personnel who shall be enterprising and self reliant.
4. To train people who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problems for the convenience of man.
5. To give exposure on professional studies in the technologies.

Considering the TVE areas and objectives outlined, it is expected that the TVE students from post basic level who could not further their studies should be able to get or create job using the competencies acquired and probably, further their education later in life to acquire more training and better pay if they desire. In the same vein, TVE students from tertiary level are expected upon graduation to be able to repair vehicles, build furniture, do house wiring, maintain roads, electricity and refineries, organize businesses more efficiently, improve the food supplies, proffer solution to technological, social and economic problems, among others. Unfortunately, the expected conditions seem not to be the reality. This could be as a result of several challenges confronting the TVE programme in Nigeria.

Challenges Facing the Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) Programme in Nigeria

Some of the challenges confronting the TVE in Nigeria as articulated by several scholars include but not limited to inadequate funding, inadequate teaching and learning facilities, laboratories and workshops (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016), inadequate motivation of TVE teachers (Onyene, Olusanya, Salisu & Johnson, 2007), fast disappearance of culture of hard work on the part of the TVE students and gap between theory and practice (Obidile, 2014). Other challenges include: low social status of TVE (Joshua, 2015), ineffective implementation of the TVE curriculum

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(Obusor, 2005), insufficient time for TVE practical (Inyiagu, 2014), inadequate TVE teachers' preparatory training programmes, ineffective monitoring of the TVE programme, the quest for immediate wealth by the TVE students (get wealthy quick syndrome), inadequate TVE programme linkages for transferability of ideas, inadequate TVE centres for teaching and learning of the appropriate skills and insufficient market for TVE products.

The issue of developing and sustaining skilled workforce for Nigeria industrial sector through the TVE programme is of paramount importance. Nigerian citizens especially the labour force population needs to be skilled through the TVE programme for either paid job or self employment so as to reduce the high rate of unemployment and poverty in the country. Although recently, the Nigerian government approved the establishment of Vocational Enterprise Institutions and Innovative Enterprise Institutions so as to admit secondary school graduates with minimum certificate and provide them with vocational and technological skills needed in various sectors of the economy (National Board for Technical Education NBTE, 2004). However, the impact of these enterprises has not been significantly observed, probably, because the target was on those with academic qualification(s).

Strategies for Adaptation

In order to enhance the TVE programme so as to enrich the capabilities of its recipients to satisfy industrial and social needs and reduce the rate of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria, the following strategies are proposed.

Incorporation of related skill acquisition programmes into the TVE programme: All the skill acquisition programmes like entrepreneurship programme, innovative enterprise institutions, among others should be registered under the TVE programme for proper monitoring, evaluation and reporting on a continuous basis. Any education and training provided by the government to equip its citizens with skills and attitude necessary to be productive and self reliant should be registered under the TVE programme for proper accountability and to prevent costly duplication of efforts. This would also ensure that government at all levels do not waste resources through the establishment of incompatible skill acquisition programmes that could not enhance development. When incorporating the related skill acquisition programmes into the TVE, there is need to categorize the TVE programme into different levels/sectors such as the formal sector and the non-formal sector. The formal sector which is already being practiced includes the TVE obtained within the school environment, while the non-formal sector should include the TVE training which are obtained outside the school environment.

The technical and vocational training outside the school setting (non-formal sector) should also be grouped into different levels considering the needs of the people, the industries, the environment and how tough the mastery of each skill appears. At each level, the duration could differ depending upon the individual

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capabilities. Upon completion of each level, the trainee should have mastered the specific skill but if otherwise, he would be given further training. When the trainee has met the required criteria and has shown proficiency in the skill acquired, upon graduation, he should be given a certificate which should be recognized by the public. The non-formal sector should be for both those with and without much education or certificate(s).

Increase access to TVE programme: Since TVE is designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower, middle and higher levels of qualification for one or group of occupation(s). Numerous well equipped TVE centres and institutes should be established in various communities across the nation (by the government in partnership with the town unions) putting into consideration the differences in geographical areas. These TVE centres should be made to provide various types of skill acquisition training for the unemployed, under-employed or new entrants to the labour market. The TVE centres should also be responsible for the re-training of the already employed citizens according to the required skills at a reduced cost. The TVE institutes/centres should also be made accessible to the vulnerable groups, handicapped, displaced workers, retired and the incarcerated population to enhance their economic development opportunities.

Effective industry and TVE programme collaboration/linkages: The success of the TVE programme depends on the effective co-operation and collaboration of the industry and the market demands. To achieve a sustainable TVE programme intervention, attention should be paid to strengthening the gap between the TVE and the labour market demands. TVE administrators should often conduct needs assessment of the people, the industries and the market and match them with proper TVE planning and implementation. Oviawe, Uwameiye and Uddin (2017) stated that for TVE in Nigeria to achieve its envisaged objectives, it must be properly strengthened through school-workplace training collaboration. It is worthy to note that if the TVE training given to citizens do not commensurate with the skills required in the industries and market, there would be incompatibility which could lead to increase in the rate of unemployment and underemployment. It is therefore imperative that TVE administrators should often ascertain the needs and demands of the local environment, the market and the industries with a view to structuring the TVE curriculum to meet these needs so that TVE graduates could fit in appropriately in the world of work.

Enhancement of TVE teacher preparatory and re-training programmes: Just as the saying goes ‘one cannot give what one does not have’. Training and re-training of the TVE teachers are of paramount importance. TVE teachers should always receive adequate training and re-training for professional development. For TVE teachers to

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be up-to-date, they should always move with the positive changes which are usually observed in the teaching and learning processes. It is expected that teachers should take the lead in the positive changes that usually occur in education sector. Recently, the information and communication technology (ICT) facilities were introduced in the teaching and learning processes, it is expected that these facilities should be introduced and adequately used in the training and re-training programmes of the teachers. Changes in these new technologies should always be acknowledged and improved technology should be used in the training and re-retraining programmes of TVE teachers so as to enhance their skills to tackle the ever rising changes and demands of skills by the industries and labour market. As technological development is becoming rampant, it is important that TVE teachers should be regularly trained and re-trained with improved and up-to-date technologies so as to produce competent graduates who could compete favourably in this era of technological changes and challenges.

Adequate funding: Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) programme should be adequately funded in order to achieve its objectives especially as the programme is directly relevant to the world of work which serves as a bedrock for rapid development. Obulor (2006); Offiong, Akpan and Usoro (2013); Okwelle and Wordu (2016) observed that funding is one of the major challenges confronting TVE in achieving its objectives. For the TVE programme to live up to expectation, the practice requires adequate funding for infrastructure maintenance, technological facilities' repair and renewal and regular purchasing of improved equipment and tools that meet the industrial and environmental needs and demands. This entails that sufficient funds should be provided to the TVE programme by the TVE stakeholders in partnership with the government, for effective running of the TVE programme. Furthermore, adequate funding is also needed in the TVE programme to assist the TVE graduates who have demonstrated reasonable innovative skills to become employers of labour.

Provision of adequate equipment, laboratories and workshops: The same tools and equipment used in the industries should be used in the TVE programme. Using appropriate tools and equipment could make the recipients innovative as they look for ways of improving the already existing equipment. Most TVE teachers have been compelled to use the obsolete tools and equipment available to teach because of the non-availability of the improved tools and equipment and this could lead to the production of graduates who could neither get job in the industries nor create jobs probably due to lack of appropriate skills required to operate modern industrial equipment.

Similarly, Oviawe and Uwameiye (2010) reported that most TVE institutions lack the tools and equipment necessary for practical TVE education. According to the authors, the little equipment in workshops and laboratories are often obsolete, bearing

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little or no resemblance to the technologies currently used by the 21st century workplace. For improved teaching and learning of TVE, adequate equipment, laboratories and workshops should be provided and utilized in the TVE programme.

Provision of adequate career guidance: Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) students and trainees should be encouraged to achieve their career goals. They need appropriate career guidance and counseling services that would enable them concentrate on the programme. As Ojo (2008) opined that lack of comprehensive career guidance of students is one of the problems confronting the TVE programme. In order to tackle the TVE status disregard, it is believed that if the TVE graduates are adequately engaged after graduation, the programme could speak for itself and could be highly regarded by the public. When the public is certain about the employment benefits of the TVE to its recipients, there could be increase in the rate of enrollment of the citizens in the programme especially in the non-formal sector. Those who are not absorbed in the formal sector, could be absorbed in the non-formal sector and this could help to reduce waste of time and energy of the labour force who might be waiting endlessly for the university admission.

Incorporation of school-to-work programmes in the post basic education and extension of period of industrial training for TVE students in the tertiary institutions: The practice in Nigeria is that TVE students at the tertiary level are usually given few months ranging from three to six months for industrial training. At the post basic (secondary) level, most students are not given such opportunity. Incorporating school-to-work programmes in all the post basic education is necessary as it would help the secondary school students to practice what they have learnt and improve on them. As the saying goes 'practice makes perfect'. Furthermore, it would be necessary to attach a stipend which could be derived from Education Trust Fund and paid to those TVE students involved in the school-to-work programmes so as to motivate them. The little cash reward could also help those who might not have the opportunity to further their education due to financial constraint, to save and enroll in part-time studies. When this is done, it would go a long way to curb unemployed school drop outs. The school-to-work programmes to be incorporated at the post basic level could be in the form of job placement, mentoring, internship or apprenticeship.

Considering the market demand for appropriate skills, it is important to increase the period for industrial training of TVE students at the tertiary level from six months to two or more years of apprenticeship (Obidile, 2014). A good number of years of apprenticeship in industrial work experience scheme of the TVE students is important as it would enhance the competencies acquired and enable the recipients to visualize and interact with the environment and the labour market and also enhance the preparedness of TVE students for life of work.

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Provision of market for TVE products: Effort should be made by the TVE administrators to provide market for TVE products because, without adequate market for TVE products, there might not be economic independence which is the cornerstone of most human endavour. TVE administrators and TVE graduates should therefore create appropriate channels for marketing of TVE products which could be in the form of exhibition, trade fair or e-marketing/shops. Marketing of TVE products should also include adequate display of TVE research findings and results so that appropriate authorities could hold on to them and improve. Also, on-line TVE programme could be launched and marketed so that interested citizens who opt for that type of training could acquire them.

Conclusion

Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) programme which equip the recipients with the necessary competencies with which to be economically independent should be adequately recognized and implemented using the mapped out strategies, since the TVE programme is geared towards retrieving Nigeria from high rate of poverty, unemployment and technological dependence.

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