

REBRANDING VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper focused on rebranding Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for youth's employment and national security in Nigeria. It examined briefly the concepts of technical vocational education and training (TVET), youths, unemployment and national security as well as the effects of unemployment on facilitating youths employment in order to foster national security in Nigeria as well as the challenges facing the effective implementation of TVET programmes in Nigeria. The authors contended that TVET has been accepted globally as a strong catalyst to development and sustainable national security because of its potentials in job creation, wealth generation, poverty reduction and technological transformation. It was suggested, among others, that the relevant arms of government should adequately fund, plan, implement, and manage TVET programmes in all educational institutions, especially tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In addition, provision of adequate facilities, equipment, consumable materials, and hand tools is very imperative for TVET to be adequately rebranded in Nigeria.

Keywords: Technical and vocational education and training (TVET), Youths, National Security.

Youth's employment, poverty, social unrest and insecurity are among the most pressing challenges presently facing many countries across the globe. This conviction is amply reflected in numerous contemporary educational literatures. Akwara, Akwara, Enwuchola, Adekunle and Udaw (2013) posited that the security of poverty and unemployment has ravaged almost all nations of the world in different dimensions and shades similarly, Adebayo (2013) agreed that youth's unemployment and its attendant rising wave of crime are part of the major social problems affecting the growth and development of Nigeria and other developing countries for a very long time. Many scholars and political analysis have suggested that empowering youths with practical job skills is very imperative in order to minimize the negative socio-political and economic consequences of joblessness. Obviously, this is only achievable through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It is pertinent to state that for (TVET) to achieve its envisaged multiple objectives, it must be repositioned and strengthened adequately. This paper therefore, examined how (TVET) could be repositioned for youths employment and national security in Nigeria.

The Concept of TVET

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2009) viewed (TVET) as learning, aims at developing skills in the practice of certain trades, as well as learning, aims at preparing students for entry into the labour market in general. The organization maintained that in both cases, learning may be geared towards direct access to the labour market or lay the foundation for access to higher education and training with joining specific trades in view. The organization added that TVET encompasses programmes that provide participants with skills, knowledge and aptitudes that enable them to engage in productive work, adapt to rapidly changing labour markets and economies, and participate as responsible citizens in their respective societies.

Indeed, various contemporary definition of the term "Technical, Vocational Education and Training" (TVET) are evolving to reflect the fundamental changes in the scope of the programmes worldwide. Most recently, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) defined (TVET) as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of educational process involving, the study of technologies and related sciences, the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life in addition to general education. FRN (2013) listed the goals of (TVET) to include among others: position of trained manpower in the areas of applied sciences, technology, business, advanced craft as well as providing training and related skills for self-reliant and employment. Indeed, (TVET) is a potent means for fast-tracking technological progress, citizens' capacities, economic growth and national development (Akhueomonkhan and Raimi, 2013). It is designed to train skilled and entrepreneurial workforces that are needed to create wealth that would help reduce the menace of poverty and unemployment (Maigida, 2014).

According to UNESCO-UNEVOC (2006), (TVET) is classified into three categories: formal, non-formal and informal TVET. Formal TVET refers to organized vocational education programmes provided within an approved public or private educational or training institution and it is structured (in terms of curriculum learning objectives and learning time) in such a way that it constitutes a continuous "ladder" where one level leads to the next and finally leads to certification. In a nutshell, formal

TVET covers vocational education programmes provided within an approved public institutions. It is intentional from the learner's perspective, it is school-based, it has a rigid curriculum, and the entry qualifications of trainees are fixed. Moreover, teachers in the formal TVET delivery system are required to be trained technical teachers with relevant vocational teachers' qualifications.

Non-formal TVET is the type of vocational education and training which takes place outside the formal school system either on a regular or intermittent basis. It has the advantage of a short-term training period; it is occupation-specific; the main emphasis is on the acquisition of practical skills for self-reliance or direct employment in a related field. For this reason, skilled craftsmen with some pedagogical training may be engaged as instructors.

Informal TVET is the type of vocational education that is provided by craftsmen of different trades in the informal sector of the economy. It is more appropriately often referred to as vocational training or experience based learning and is usually carried out in form of apprenticeship system. Thus, the informal TVET is characterized by the non-existence of any curriculum or structure as there is no well-designed scheme and the method of training is not always sequential. The master craftsman decides out of his experience what the apprentice should learn.

Youths Unemployment and National Security

Youths, according to Osakwe (2013), are persons between the ages of 18 and 24. They would normally have completed secondary education, and would either be in tertiary institutions or striving to secure employment, or be already employed. Osakwe maintained that youth is generally viewed as a phase, a transition from dependence to independence and is characterized by some distinct features such as leaving the parental home and establishing a new living arrangement; completing full-time education; forming close, stable personal relationships outside of the family, often resulting in marriage and children and testing the labour market, finding work and possibly settling into a career, and achieving a more or less sustainable livelihood.

Unemployment in the other hand is the condition or situation where person or group of persons is without jobs (Adebayo, 2013). Osakwe, in another occasion explained that, unemployment exists when a fit and eligible individual or group of individuals do not have a job or work to do for some compensation. The root cause of unemployment in Nigeria as identified by Adebayo, (2013) include; skills mismatch, lack of relevant skills, lack of qualified an trained an trained manpower, rapid rural-urban migration, inappropriate school curricula, rapid population growth, rapid expansion of the educational system, decline in the manufacturing sector and corruption among others. Similarly, Akwara et al (2013) noted that unemployment and under-employment in a developing country such as Nigeria are largely caused by pressure of rapidly growing population of school leavers, defective manpower and job seekers selectivity of job availability and location.

Indeed, unemployment is a global trend but it is prevalent mostly in the developing countries of the world such as Nigeria, with social, economic, political and psychological attendants. Adebayo noted that unemployment as a global concern is of more dire consequence for youths. He reported that global youth's unemployment rate was projected at 12.7 percent in 2012. This portends immense dangers when considering the fact that young people are the next generation of potentially productive economic and

social actors. He added that the Nigeria youths unemployment in particular and that of the entire African youths at large has been a major-giving rise to other criminal tendencies in the youths, which threatens the socio-economic peace and stability of the nation and that of the continent.

Osakwe (2013) noted that some schools of thought emphasize on human security in the context of national security. He explained that it is the concept of human security that encompasses the protection of lives and property; a pre-condition for the improvement of people's wellbeing; protection of human rights; and the provision of basic human needs. Akwara, et al (2013) noted that a broad understanding of what constitutes a national security in Nigeria includes disease, violent crime, political assassinations, kidnapping, ethno-religious conflicts, civil war, terrorism, and environmental degradation. Implicit in these definitions of national security is that when adequate security is provided for the citizens of any nation, a congenial environment for development and self-actualization is achieved.

There is a very close relationship between youths' unemployment and national security. According to Adebayo (2013), unemployment in Nigeria poses many social, economic, political and psychological consequences, which directly and indirectly impacts on national security. Some of the social consequences of the high level of youths' unemployment on national security is that it encourages the development of street youths and urban urchins popularly known as area boys which is a culture and encourages criminal behavior. Unemployment has also contributed to increasing feminization of poverty among young women, which has encouraged prostitution as a means of survival and leads to trafficking of young women across international borders with transnational security implications. Psychologically, the unemployed persons usually experience trauma, anger, frustration, low self-esteem, negative life satisfaction, unhappiness and mental disorder including depression and acute stress. Other economic consequences of unemployment include flee of youths and able-bodied men from the country in search of better opportunities elsewhere, thereby reducing the labour force and manpower capacity in Nigeria.

It is highly incontrovertible that youth unemployment is a major threat to national security in many countries, including Nigeria. It is obvious that the unemployed youths could perpetrate or could be engage in perpetrating violence and thus threatening the national security. The axiom the ideal person is a devil workshop is confirm by Osakwe (2013), when he posited that, unemployment among the youths is responsible for all manner of social devices such as violence, crime, cultism and criminality. He specifically pointed out that majority of violent acts that threatening national security in Nigeria has been ascribed to youth unemployment. These include the Aguleri-Umuleri war in Anambra State; the militancy in the Niger-Delta; Ife-Modakeke dispute; the post election crisis, and the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and National Security

Osakwe (2013) pointed out that national insecurity is fostered when there is lack of adequate education, poor educational curriculum or a twisted educational system. He specifically cited the Vision 20:20/20 Economic Blueprint, which stipulated as follows:

The deficit in educational quality has grossly undermined the competitiveness of the Nigeria labour force in national and global markets ... Nigeria finds itself faced with

the paradox of the simultaneous existence of surplus labour and scarcity of skills, due to persistent skills mismatch, which further compounds unemployment.

This further lend credence to Adebayo's (2013) assertion that it is in poor education system, wealth disparity and display, urbanization, bad governance, corruption: identity factors such as religion, ethnicity, geographical groups, political groups that the threats to national security domicile. Many scholars and political analysts have therefore, suggested vocational education as being the most viable panacea to all manners of unemployment and its attendant national security challenges in Nigeria. Indeed, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) contribute to sustainable livelihood through the provision of skills, knowledge, attitude and values needed for the place of work. This position is shared by Kombe (2010) who posited that Technical and Vocational Education and Training prepares people for the world of work and pointed out that in contrast to general education, learning in TVET is centred on 'applied' as opposed to 'academic'; practical as opposed to theory, and skills as opposed to knowledge. Similarly, Akhuemonkhan and Raimi (2013) acknowledge that (TVET) is a potent means for fast-tracking technological progress, citizens' capacities, economic growth and national development. Furthermore, in recognition of the vital role of skills development in national development, Ayonmike (2010) posited that empowering youths with job skills is very imperative in order to minimize the negative socio-political and economic consequences of joblessness.

Rebranding TVET in Nigeria for Youth Employment and National Security

There are many strategies for repositioning TVET in Nigeria for youths employment and national security. Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke (2013) listed the following as possible strategies for repositioning TVET in Nigeria tertiary institution: adequate funding of TVET programmes, training and retraining of TVET teachers and instructors, adequate provision of required TVET infrastructures and facilities, adequate internal and external supervision, public private partnership, adequate planning and implementation of TVET programmes by government, adequate provision of instructional materials and adequate provision of instructional materials and adequate provision of scholarship/grants for TVET teachers/instructors.

Amechi (2013) also suggested the following as strategies for rebranding TVET in Nigeria improvement of instructional and infrastructural resources in TVET institutions, regular capacity building and training workshops for teachers of TVET, increased funding for TVET institutions for procurement of equipment and more facilities for better learning, better synergy between TVET institutions and industry through exchange programmes; genuine political will by government and educational policy makers; improving the conditions of service and regular motivation for TVET teachers and instructors; lastly, regular sensitization to improve the public's poor perception of TVET as desirable course option instead of tagging it as inferior course option.

Musobo and Gaga (2012) suggested public-private partnership as another strategy for repositioning TVET in Nigeria. This source explained that public-private partnership involves contractual arrangements between a public sector authority and a private entity, whereby the private party provides or delivers a service that should have under normal circumstances been provided by the public sector and assumes substantial financial, technical and operational risk in the process of service delivery. Similarly,

UNESCO-UNEVOC (2012) posited that public-private partnership could also be effective in strengthening TVET teacher education and facilitating their professional development. The organizations explained that partnership between public TVET institutions and private sector industries could foster TVET teacher education through acquisition of practical skills and development of positive professional attitudes as well as providing opportunities for teachers to have industrial experience. In addition, it would enable teachers to have access to the latest technology and practices and also enable TVET institutions to know the level and types of skills currently required. Moreover, an effective collaboration between public TVET institutions and private sector industries will ensure that TVET curricula and teaching methodologies are up to date and relevant to the needs of the industry.

The researcher, however, suggest that for effective reposition of TVET: the apprenticeship scheme should be reintroduce into the nation economy system for manpower development, there should be no disparity between Higher National Diploma (HND) and B. Sc. Holder, entry qualification in to the polytechnic and the university for technological study should be the same, Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) should be properly supervised and monitored by both the school and the industry for effective result, students should be placed on scholarships while the technical teachers should be sent for refresher training, both within and outside the country for acquisition of more skills, relevant industries should be made to go to the technological institutions and pick the graduating students for employment into their relevant areas of studies. With these the poor public perception of TVET will become a thing of the past and the national insecurity challenges in Nigeria will be drastically reduced if not eliminated. TVET, however, prepares people for the world of work and through TVET, people acquire skills, knowledge, attitudes and values for their chosen occupation, which enable them to participate in the production of quality goods and services.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the high level of youth's unemployment is a very pervasive issue that has threatened Nigeria's national security. It has also shown that, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been universally acknowledged as a very viable strategy for tackling the problem of youths unemployment. It could empower youths with relevant vocational skills for paid or self-employment. However, the implementation of TVET in Nigeria is plagued by numerous challenges. It is believed that if the challenges discussed and the strategies recommended in this paper are adequately addressed, it would undoubtedly reposition TVET in Nigeria so that it can create remarkable positive impact in providing the youths with saleable skills for technological and economic growth of the nation thus fostering the country's national security.

The Way Forward

The following are suggested as the way forward:

1. The relevant arms of government should adequately fund, plan, implement and manage TVET programmes in all educational institutions, especially tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

2. Provision of adequate facilities tools/equipment, and consumable materials, is very imperative for TVET to be adequately repositioned in Nigeria.
3. Provision of qualified TVET personnel; instructional materials; in-service training for TVET personnel as well as scholarship/grants for TVET teachers/instructors is very imperative for TVET to be adequately repositioned in Nigeria.
4. Proper supervision and monitoring of the implementation of TVET programme by government ministries, departments and agencies is very imperative for TVET to be adequately repositioned in Nigeria.
5. The introduction of competency based TVET programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions is very important for proper repositioning of TVET in Nigeria.

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