

## TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) AN INNOVATIVE TOOL FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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### **Abstract**

The paper acknowledges Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as an innovative tool for national integration. TVET provides the foundation for productive and satisfying career by offering the learner thorough and specialized preparation for paid or self-employment via its broad training programme which offers broad knowledge and generic skills applicable to a number of occupations within a given field. It explores innovation as an engine of sustainable growth for national integration. National integration on its part, is the term used when the citizens are conscious that they have a common identity, regard themselves as one and work together to ensure the development of their country irrespective of differences in class, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation or any other differences that may exist between them. Hence, the researchers identified some factors such as Youth Restiveness, Structural Imbalance, Religious Fanatism, Revenue Allocation, Multiple Languages, Ethnic Diversity, Corruption, Political Dispute, Poverty and Rigged Election as factors that hinder national integration in Nigeria. Conclusively, innovation through TVET is a sine qua non that would promote national integration cum enterprising potentials as well as encourage allocation of adequate resources. The following way forward was proffered among others De-emphasizing Bribe, Ethnic origin and Religion, History Education, Sensitizations/Campaigns, Equal Opportunity for Employment and Youth Employment

**Keywords:** TVET, Innovation, and National Integration

Nigeria like many other developing nations is bedeviled with numerous challenges. Among these challenges is the lack of national integration. National integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. Innovation, culture and education have been identified as an instrument for national integration. However these factors could only be achieved through creative culture. Similarly creative culture is the bedrock of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Therefore the author is of the view that innovative culture through TVET will enhance national integration.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a type of education designed to equip individuals with competencies in an occupational trade for the technological and economic development of the nation. TVET according to UNESCO (2002) is the brain behind technological advancement and economic fortune of developing countries across the globe. TVET is a systemic process of acquiring and upgrading requisite knowledge and skills needed for self-reliance. TVET is the education for those who need it, those who want it, and those who want to progress by it (Okoye & Okwelle, 2014). This implies that an individual who acquires those competencies and some psychomotor skills in TVET is already empowered to be self-reliant. Such individual has greater opportunities to earn a livelihood as well contribute to national development. Hence, technology and vocational education is designed to offer training to improve individual's general proficiency in

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*Multidisciplinary Journal of Research Development, Volume 28 No 1, December, 2018-ISSN 1596-974X* 1

relation to their occupations. Thus, a sound practice of TVET seemed to be the secret behind the success of most of the developed nations of the world. Gasper (2014) described TVET as the type of education that provides the much needed technical activities for industrial transformation and promotion of local technologies and entrepreneurial activities across all regions. Therefore, training in TVET prepares people who could apply relevant practical skill to make positive changes within their society and afford a self-dependent life. TVET holds the key to training the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce needed for the changing technological work environment of any nation. TVET brings about creativity and creativity enhances innovation.

Innovation is the process through which value is created and delivered to a community of users in the form of a new solution. More so, innovation can be defined as a process that involves multiple activities to uncover new ways of doing things. (Anthony, Johnson, Sinfield. & Altman, 2008; Okoye, 2014). Consequently, innovation creates bigger opportunities and is critical for the success and survival of economic growth. It helps in developing original concepts and is a driver of optimizing operations. Companies as well as institutions that innovate are able to set the organization in a different paradigm in order to identify new opportunities and best methods to solve current problems (Davila, Epstein, & Shelton, 2006). Innovation should not be confused with creation since this can be defined as the act of making, inventing, or producing something. However, innovations can be realized with creativity and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is the bedrock of creativity. Therefore, TVET serves as veritable innovative tools for national integration.

National integration is very important in the building of a strong and prosperous nation. National integration has been subjected to a myriad of interpretations, but one of the most consistent elements conveyed by the term remains 'bringing together of different parts of the ethnic groups in the country into a whole'. In this context the administration of national integration in Nigeria would refer to the processes of bringing the various Nigerian ethnic groups to cohere, on a continuing basis (Ifeanacho, & Nwagwu, 2009). Akpan (1990), Emelonye and Buergenthal (2011) stated that cohering often involves the development of cherished norms and values respected by all the cohering groups, in order to enable all component parts in the integration process to continue to have a sense of belonging to the political community created, not out of 'social-contract' through the colonial process of integration.

National integration is the term used when the citizens are conscious of the way they have a common identity, regard themselves as one and work together to ensure the development of their country irrespective of differences in class, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation or any other differences that may exist between them (Pearl, 2018). More so, National integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It implies that although we have a tendency to belong to totally different castes, religions and regions and speak totally different languages we have a tendency to acknowledge the actual fact that we have a tendency to believe that we are all one. It means that though we belong to different background, religions and regions and speak different languages we recognize the fact that we are all one. Conclusively, national integration implies avoidance of divisive movements that would balkanize the nation and presence of attitudes throughout the society that give preference to national and public interest as distinct from narrow-minded interest.

### **Factors Militating Against National Integration in Nigeria**

Many factors hinder national integration in Nigeria and have been attested to be impediment to our progress especially in the area of technology. These factors that have been identified by Pearl (2018) are as follows:

- 1. Ethnic Diversity:** There are many ethnic groups in Nigeria and members of a particular ethnic group tend to be loyal to their people in government or other exalted positions. They therefore are favoured over members of the other ethnic groups. This threatens national integration.
- 2. Multiple Languages:** This is closely related to ethnic diversity. Nigeria has over 400 languages and this leads to an obstacle in communication among citizens, as people tend to flow with those who speak the same language as them. This implies that Nigerian Lingua franca, 'English language' is spoken only by about 15% of the population (commonly the educated elites).
- 3. Revenue Allocation:** The different parts of the country are not equally treated when it comes to revenue allocation. Money allocated to the northern parts of the country is proportionally more than that given to other parts of the country. Probably because there are more local government areas in the north than any other parts of the country. This does not help national integration as ill-feelings will arise among citizens.
- 4. Religion Fanatism:** The activities of some religious fanatics who are loyal to members of their religion and favour them over other members of different religions. Thereby creating animosity between members of the different religion. This has threatened national integration.
- 5. Structural Imbalance:** There is structural imbalance between northern and southern Nigeria. The reason is that the northern part of Nigeria seem to have more political will than other parts of the country.
- 6. Youth Restiveness,:** This is caused by angry and hungry youths who are unemployed. They are being used by greedy and selfish politicians to create tension among citizens of the country for their political interests. National integration is hard to come by this situation.
- 7. Corruption:** This is the giving and receiving of bribes for services rendered. This makes it impossible for those who are in need of that service to have a level play ground, thus, robbing them of their rights to equal treatment. This effect of corruption in Nigeria economic development cannot be over emphasized. Those who do not have means to offer bribe become frustrated and develop hatred for those who can afford bribe. This does not help national integration.
- 8. Political Dispute:** Nigeria has been polarized along party lines and it happens that Nigeria is a multi-party nation. Members of political party both ruling and opposition no longer have the interest of the nation at their heart but their own party interest.
- 9. Poverty:** A vast majority of the country's wealth are in the hands of a very few people and they circulate it among themselves leaving the masses in poverty. This creates division between the rich and poor developing suspicion and hatred towards the rich and this is not healthy for national integration.
- 10. General Election:** This has become contests that must be won at all costs and all sorts of things are indulged in by political parties to make sure they win, losers in election resort to violence thus creating division among the masses and party supporters.

## **Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) an Innovative Tool for National Integration**

Harnessing the potentials of TVET for socio-economic and technological emancipation has been in the front burner of many emerging nations. Thus, from global perspective, arguments, claims and counterclaims over the capability of TVET in fostering brighter future and sustainable economy has been laid to rest (Moore & King, 2014). However, studies have it that many technologically advanced nations of the world realized their potentials and maintained firm footings through adaptation and practice of TVET (UNESCO, 2001; UNESCO, 2006). This implies that technological advancement of any nation depends largely on its ability to transform its resources into practical reality, which guarantees its self-sustenance and viability.

Sequel to this, Okoye (2013) opines that TVET programmes require steady revision and updating in order to flow with the current practices required for national development and integration. This would go a long way in enhancing capacity building and unity among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria via intellectual training and ability to solve problems pragmatically. By implication, all TVET streams should contain humanistic and technological component on one hand, and training opportunities geared toward problem –solving on the other. This combination will also ensure that young people learn to think better, to do better and work together as a team which in turn enhances the spirit of togetherness that leads to national integration. It would make it possible to find new solutions to problems as they emerged; reawaken manpower development to bridge the yeanning gap in industrial manpower need for economic growth of Nigeria and thereby reduce poverty (Duhu, & Mbagu, 2016).

Consequently, TVET play important roles in implementing and promoting national integration since TVET institutions are major suppliers of workforce that will be in the forefront in dealing directly with sustainable issues. Thus, TVET can also lead by creating workforce that support green technology and implementing regulatory or monitoring tools to assess the national integration practices. These ideas should be integrated in TVET curriculum, learning contents, teaching-learning processes, and also reflected in school policies and practices (Chikaire, Orusha, Onogu, & Okafor, 2011; Audu, Karim, & Balash, 2013). Hence, TVET requires strong commitment from top management and stakeholders, innovative ideas that can be accepted by the stakeholders and feasible economically, socially, and environmentally thereby fostering national integration through innovation in TVET.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria's quest for national integration was given the impetus it needed by the military elite corps. This is partly because the military has dominated Governance for many years. The basic structural reorganization needed to foster national integration was instituted by the military. This also includes steps taken to assuage the fears of the minorities enclosed within the hitherto three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The immobilized state of national integration in Nigeria is as a result of the absence of normative standards and respected by all parties. The institutionalization of such standard should transcend the federal, state, local governments and the ward levels. However, it should be acknowledge that the journey towards that destination is still a long distance away. Nigeria is still on that part, but a purposeful leadership which is inclining to inputs, would make national integration attainable. Conclusively, TVET as an innovation tool is a sine qua non that would promote national integration cum enterprising potentials as well as encourage allocation of adequate resources and

administration of all-inclusive reform to equip people with skills to be self reliant, which in turn reduces poverty and engenders sustainable development that enhances national integration.

### **Way Forward**

Sequel to the importance of TVET in enhancing innovations that bring about national development and integration, it is therefore recommended as follows:

1. **De-emphasizing Bribe, Ethnic origin and Religion:** Our traditional and religious leaders should educate their followers concerning national integration telling them that people segregating those who are not from their ethnic group, tribe or religion leads to division among them and will hamper the development of the country, which will in turn affect them negatively. This should be contained in official documents.
2. **Emphasis in national symbols:** Our national symbols like the national anthem and pledge should not just be taught in schools. People should be made to imbibe the message behind these symbols as a way of life. People going about their daily activities carrying the message of our national symbols in their heart foster national integration.
3. **History Education:** Nigeria history should be compulsorily taught up to the end of secondary school level, this will make people to a large extent know how Nigeria become one. They will also learn about the efforts of our founding fathers in maintaining this oneness. This will lay a burning desire in the hearts of youths to uphold the efforts of our heroes towards national integration.
4. **Sensitizations/Campaigns:** Higher institutions and other relevant bodies should carry out sensitizations and campaigns in favour of national integration. Humanities courses in General Studies (GNS) in higher institutions to teach ways of improving national integration can be taken to the rural areas as cinema by drama groups.
5. **Equal Opportunity for Employment:** Employment should be given to youths based on merits regardless of states, tribes, religion or other factors. This will make people believe that they are one.
6. **Youth Employment:** Not all youths are privileged to have formal education, and thus, may obtain gainful employment. In this instance, the government should find ways of empowering them since they can be taught to be craftsmen or technicians through TVET programme to create employment for themselves. This will keep them occupied with the right things, they will not be hungry or angry and they will not blame anyone for their inability to cater for themselves or their families. They will also not be available to be used as tools to create tension or crises by greedy or selfish politicians.
7. **Political Fairness:** Politicians at all levels of governance must have interest of the people at heart and not just go into politics for their own selfish interests. In addition, they should not make politics a 'do-or-die affair', winners in elections should extend their hands of fellowship to losers and let it not be a solution of 'the winner takes it all'. By so doing, crises will be averted and the people will have confidence in the government. This will in turn promote national integration.
8. **True Federalism:** Federalism is the system of government whereby power is constitutionally shared between the federal, state and local governments. If true federalism is adopted no part of the country will feel trampled upon, thus strengthening national integration.
9. **Revamping of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC):** Graduates should stop lobbying to be posted to their states of choice. They should be posted across all states of the country without any bias or consideration of ethnic group, wealth, who they know or any other thing. States should also

receive them with open arms and treat them as indigenes. The corp members should be encouraged to learn languages and cultures of their host states and should be given employment opportunities in the states civil services.

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