Empowering the Youths through Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for Effectiveness Small Scale Metal Working Industries in North Central State, Nigeria.

by

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Abstract

The mass mobility of schools graduates into menial jobs in the absence of government white-collar jobs in north central Nigeria has become a thing of major concern. Although this development is not completely unexpected in a country where government industries have been eroded through the annals of corruption and squander mania like Nigeria, what has become very surprising here is the fact that graduates of TVET institutions with their supposed acquisition of high level skills and man power development, also join the band wagon of roaming the streets in search of government jobs thereby perpetrating various forms of social vices instead of creating jobs for themselves and others in the society. In view of this development, it has become imperative to embark on a discussion like this in order to proffer solutions to this ugly development. The paper examined the role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the empowerment of the youths for the purpose of reducing youth unemployment and under-employment, and their attendant social vices in the society. The major focus of the paper include; the challenges of TVET as a centre-hub for propelling youth empowerment in North-Central Nigeria and the implications of TVET challenges to the small-scale metal working industries in North-Central Nigeria. The following were among the recommendations: government should review her current policy on TVET in order to key-in properly into the on-going world reform on preparing TVET educators for the next generation; TVET should be made compulsory for all the youths in Nigeria after secondary schools. This is to ensure that they acquire functional skills for self reliance in the society.

Keywords: Youth empowerment, TVET, unemployment and underemployment, small- scale metal working industries.

Introduction

In an emerging economy such as Nigeria, as one time biggest economy in Africa (Ololade, 2015), the role of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a centre-hub for propelling the overall economic emancipation of the society, through mass skill delivery, cannot be over emphasized. It is therefore, a statement of fact that TVET has no rival in skill delivery development, and while other aspects of education may lay claim to skill centeredness, TVET is, more skill delivery sensitive than all other sectors. Hence, Uwaifo (2009) in Ojo, Adebayo, Ogumbodede, Bakare, Adeyemo, and Edoka, (2017), stated that Technical Education, and by implication, TVET. has direct impact on the

development of any country, and the Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2000) in an agreement with this posited that TVET is a major part of technology education which means public knowledge, attitudes and skills for making, doing and using things in specifiable and reproducible ways. In the same vein Okwori (2010) asserted that TVET is the only way we can enhance productivity, wealth creation and poverty alleviation of individuals and the society in general.

From the foregoing therefore, TVET can be said to be one of the most effective means of empowering youths to, not only overcome poverty, but also limit the incidence of social vices in the society

due to joblessness and to promote a culture of peace, freedom, and democracy. Ironically, it is expected that the graduates of TVET institutions, with their certificates and supposed skill acquisition, should be exempted from the teeming number of the unemployed in the society who roam the streets in search of government jobs and perpetrate various forms of social vices. To Abdulkerim, corroborate this. (2014), citing Lemchi and Anyakoha (2002) stated that education traditionally vocational prepare individuals for the world of work, yet many of the graduates are roaming about in search of jobs. These youths are expected to venture into private businesses which will keep them out of the streets and out of trouble in the society but on the contrary, the achievement of this objective through TVET development, has continued to be elusive as TVET institutions have continuously failed to produce self-reliant graduates and as such the youths' engagement into all manners of nefarious activities has become the order of the day, nearly all over Nigeria nowadays.

In the light of the above and in realization of the importance of TVET for the overall emancipation of individuals and the society in general, successive governments, in Nigeria have strategically placed TVET in her educational policies since independence, as an instrument for mass skill delivery, for the empowerment of the youths. The climax of this was the establishment of the master-plan for Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) development in Nigeria in the 21st Century, (FME, 2000). This has given rise to the proliferation of technical colleges, polytechnic and mono techniques as well as universities across the country. These institutions awarding various certificates in TVET oriented courses including metalworking trades at the various levels of education in Nigeria. According to this document, Technical Education in Nigeria is normatively structured at four levels each with its own purpose thus:

- Pre-vocational education at primary and secondary schools for general technical awareness, acquisition of technological literacy,
- Vocational education at job-specific vocational schools for the

- production of manpower at crafts, man /eve/
- Technical education at polytechnic institutions for the production of technical/technologists level of manpower; and
- Professional education at University level.

According to this document, the master plan was originally designed primarily for the first three levels of technology education otherwise called Technical and Vocational Education (TVE). This is now known as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The term "training" has probably been added to lay emphasis on the mode of knowledge and skill transfer and acquisition that is inherent in TVET as compared to other forms of education which may not be so skill delivery centered. Training, is concerned with skills, knowledge, and attitude for doing work (Abdulkerim, 2014). From the foregoing it is clear that government has been highly determined and committed to the task of development, administration, implementation of TVET programmes at all levels for the empowerment for her citizenry. This is corroborated by the sundry policy reforms and rebranding in all sectors of the nation's economy including education in recent time in Nigeria. Without mincing words it can be said that the educational scenario and TVET in particular, like many other sectors in the sub- Sahara Africa have witnessed tremendous reforms and rebranding in resent time. In support of this, Edet, and Enoidem. (2014),posited that government now attached more importance to TVET as reflected in the various national and regional policy reforms and rebranding.

It is however, disheartening to note that in spite of all the propaganda following these reforms and rebranding in education in Nigeria, TVET programmes have minimally impacted the youths, especially in the North Central Nigeria, which is their major target. Rather, a paradox is presented here. The rate of occurrence of the indices of youth unemployment and under employment in Nigeria probably due to lack of employable skills has become an issue of concern

to many, hence Sijibomi and Miller (2014), describing youth unemployment and under employment in Nigeria, as perennial and frightening suggested that something has to be done to stem this situation in order to put Nigeria on the right step for economic development and societal peace.

Youth Unemployment and Under Employment in North Central Nigeria

The major focus of this discussion is to identify the problems inhibiting the empowerment of the youths in north central Nigeria and the country in general. This has become very necessary in order to justify the huge investment of government in this direction. This is because TVET graduates are supposed to play dual roles of re-enforcing the civil service and at the same time contributing to the growth and development of the industries in the private sector, especially the micro-economic sector of the Nation"s economy which is the engine room of the micro and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria and as such TVET graduates should have enough skills to enable them function in any of these sectors of the economy in Nigeria. In agreement with this, Ansah and Kessi, (2013) in Chukwuedo, and Omofonwan, (2014), stated that TVET is meant to equip the people with the technical and skill professional needed for industrial development as well as social progress of any country and also Agbobu and Oladokun, (2014), in Ojo etal (2017), earlier cited, and Unongo in Rilwanu, (2016), cited in Ojo, etal earlier cited, stated that TVET can perform further role in repositioning the economy through provision of manpower for industries and generation of employment which will lead to poverty alleviation improvement of standard of living, increase in life expectancy, reduction in crime, and a host of other functions in the society...

In view of the non-realization of the objectives of TVET curriculum in Nigeria up till now, it has become very important to identify these problems which have limited the performance of TVET, and to proffer solutions to them in order to bail the country out of the increasing indices of youth un-employment and underemployment which is evident in the way and

manner the youths undertake menial jobs as alternatives to the ever lacking government whitecollar-jobs in the public sector.(Attah, and Ndiomu, 2006). Example of these include motorcycle transport popularly known as riding, hair dressing and styling salon operation, while others stoop so low to undertake jobs in building and construction sites as helpers, on very meager take home pay, and many others engage in perpetrating various forms of social vices including cultism and armed robbery, human trafficking and kidnapping, rape, political thuggery, advance fee-fraud also known as (419), internet frauds etc, especially in North Central and the entirety of Nigeria.

By extension and in an agreement with the foregoing, Madas (2007), putting the statistics of the youth in Nigeria at forty-five percent (45%) of the nation's population according to FRN, (1991), lamented the involvement of a large proportion of the nation's mentally and physically active youth into crime, describing it as unproductive and unacceptable. According to this author, this portends grave consequences for a nation that is so desirous of achieving unity of purpose and economic empowerment for her citizenry. Although the above situation has been worrisome to many critically minded Nigerians, in recent time, it is more worrisome to note that many of these youths who are into menial jobs and social vices are graduates of various TVET institutions in Nigeria while many are still in schools pursuing various TVET including metal work trades, within and outside the country, hoping to come out, on graduation, to join the band-wagon, that is, to join the queue in search of jobs in the long saturated labour market of Nigeria where, "No vacancy" has become a password, (Osuala, 2004). This is a clear indication that we are yet to hit the target as far as the realization of the objectives TVET education curriculum in Nigeria is concerned.

In order to check this development and to make TVET curriculum to function properly in Nigeria, the discussants wish to say that all hands must be on deck. All stake holders in TVET matters in Nigeria must come together to fashion out a more comprehensive and practical oriented TVET curriculum that is capable of producing

graduates who would not wait for government's white-collar-jobs or engage in crimes alternative means of subsistence in the absence of government employment but rather produce graduates who would venture into private entrepreneurships in their areas of specialization in the absence of government jobs. In an agreement with this, Uwaifo, (2009), in Ojo et al, earlier cited, stated that TVET has economic and social benefits which include helping the society in meeting the maintain civilization, employment needs of the people, and citizens will become wage earners that are useful and productive assets and not liabilities to the society. In order to achieve the above objectives, it has become imperative to pursue implementation of TVET programmes in Nigeria in order to create an enabling environment which will leverage the positive contributions of the production sector into the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country and also launch Nigeria into her dream of enlisting into the league of the 20 largest economies in the world by the year 2020, which is now.

The need for the empowerment of the youths in metal work trades as well as other TVET education programmes in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized as it has become very necessary in order to create a synergy for the mop-up of the teeming population of the unemployed youths, especially the skilled ones, who have passed through TVET institutions in Nigeria. This will no doubt, help in reducing the crime wave in the society as quite a good number of the youths who hitherto, have been idle and perpetrating evils in the society will be actively engaged in industrial production of goods and services and will consequently have little or no time for social vices in the society, all things being equal.

Challenges of TVET as a Centre – Hub for Propelling Youth Empowerment in North-Central Nigeria

There is no gain saying the fact that TVET is engulfed with challenges all over the world and the north central region in Nigeria is not an exception. This has led to the inauguration of the national master-plan for Technical and Vocational

Education (TVE) Development in the 21st century on the 25th of May, 2000 by the then Honourable Minister of State for Education, Mallam Lawal Batagarawa (FME, 2000). This was an attempt to fashion out a working template for the implementation of TVE programmes in Nigeria. At the international level also, all seem not to be well with TVET, and this has given rise to series of international conferences on the advancement of TVET programmes for the empowerment of the people, example of which is the Next Generation Educators (NEXTGEN EDUCON, 2011), an international conference directed towards creating a platform for the exchange of ideas on best practices and innovations on preparing TVET educators to face the challenges of the 21st century. This mega (world) conference on TVET which was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from December 12 to 13, 2011, drew participants from 25 countries including:

Australia, Bhutan, Brunei, Darusalam, Canada, China, Egypt, Fiji, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Korea, Leo PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myammer, Nepal, Philipines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sirlanka, Thailand, UK, and USA, (NEXTGEN EDUCON 2011).

Participants from these countries, excluding Nigeria, though, sat down to engage in exchange of ideas and expertise on TVET in general and on TVET educators' development in particular. This boils down to the fact that nearly all the nations of the world are grappling with challenges emanating from TVET in varying degrees. In Nigeria, the story is not different as the problem of TVET according to FME (2000), were identified as: 'Structural imbalance and system configuration; inadequate resource impute; and poor societal attitude towards and acceptance of TVET as an alternative form of education'.

The implications of the foregoing to TVET and its stakeholders such as the small scale metal working industries in the private sector in North Central Nigeria, which is also serviced by TVET, cannot be over emphasized. It is however true that the committee above did not just stop at identifying TVET problems in Nigeria, as they also advanced a frame work for surmounting these

problems but the question that readily comes to mind is; to what extent have these problems been solved? The answer to this question is certainly not to the affirmative since a general state of imbalance is still witnessed in nearly all aspects of TVET institutions in the country such as: dilapidated buildings, moribund machines and equipments, unqualified staff, lack of practical consumable materials, undue competition and comparison of TVET courses to other subjects areas in budgetary issues without recourse to their peculiarities and cost implications by Universities and Colleges administrations etc. The consequence of this is the production of halfbaked and unskilled graduates who cannot establish their own businesses due to the fact that they cannot demonstrate the skills they do not have.

This is one of the major reasons why our youths in Nigeria cannot be self-reliant; the majority of the youths depend on government employments for their survival. In support of this, Comrade Adeniran of the Coalition Against Corrupt Leaders (CACOL, 2014) decrying the state of incapacitation of workers in Nigeria due to lack of skills and experiences asserted that well over 80% of the Nigerian workers cannot make a living from their employments and as a result, many engage into menial jobs while others take to crimes, and drugs. This group advised the Federal

Government in Nigeria to do something about this by evolving polices that would combat the current situation of poverty that is ravaging the mass of the Nigerian populace. From the views of this group it can be said that there is no better time to pursue the full implementation of TVET programmes in Nigeria than now.

In the light of the above, the discussant is of the opinion that one of the best ways to salvage this situation is through TVET development in Nigeria. This must be made to be more proactive and result oriented. This calls for going back to the drawing boards to re-design the curriculum of TVET institutions in Nigeria to make it to be focused towards specific skill delivery that will enable graduates to produce consumer goods and services that are capable of satisfying the market needs of today in the country. In view of this, government and other stakeholders in TVET matters must be ready to fund TVET developments adequately. A situation whereby government devotes the least of her Gross National Productivity (GNP) to education than most African states cannot be sustained if TVET is to be put on the right footings in Nigeria. To buttress this submission, Achor (2008) presented a statistics on the percentage of expenses of the GNP of some African countries on education showing that Nigeria is among the east financially committed to education in Africa

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7.9	4.1	7.9						

(Idumanga in Achor, 2008)

From the table above, it can be seen that Nigeria is one of the African countries that devote the least of her GNP to education. This is a clear indication that education is poorly funded in Nigeria and under this situation a functional TVET programme cannot emerge. The above goes a long way to show that Nigeria, being the giant of Africa with abundant human and material endowments, has to be more serious in funding educational programmes including TVET by allocating more of her GNP to education. This is one of the ways by which TVET and many other educational programmes could live up to

expectation in the country. In support of this, Amalu (2003), lamenting the Federal Government's low funding of science and technology by less than 0.03% of her GDP quoted the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) as recommending not less than 5% of the GDP allocation for science and technology. In the same vein, more funds should be allocated to TVET development in Nigeria if meaningful result is to be expected.

Implications of TVET Challenges to the Small-Scale Metal Working Industries in North-Central Nigeria

Myriads of challenges trail TVET development all over the world as have been severally identified in the course of this discussion. One of these challenges which may be regarded as peculiar to Nigeria, aside infrastructural inadequacies, unfavorable government policies, de-industrialization, globalization etc, is the conservatively or what the discussant may call "industrial myopia" which does not allow metal workers to see beyond the production of the types of goods and services with which they were trained in their apprenticeship days.

This, to a large extent, has crippled the ability of metal workers to alleviate their poverty as well as contribute positively to the technological advancement of the country. To corroborate this/ for instance, Attah (2012) carried out a study on the contributions of metal working trades to the poverty alleviation of metal workers in Kogi State. The population for the study was made up of 1967 metal fabricators including welders, blacksmiths, and gold smiths located within Kogi state. According to National Automobile Technicians Association of Nigeria (NATAN) based at Lokoja the state capital. Out of this population, 332 metal fabricators and welders were randomly sampled and poverty alleviation level questionnaire was formulated for the study. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data for the study. The relevance of the above study to the present discussion is not in doubt. This is because both articles are focused on the identification of the causes of poverty among small-scale metal work industries operators in North-Central Nigeria. Both articles also advanced similar solutions to the problems identified above.

The findings of the study, among other things revealed that the items produced by metal working industries in Kogi State are: Farm implements, security and house hold implements such as hoes and cutlasses/ axes, swords, Dane-guns, kitchen pots, knives, iron-doors and windows, local stoves, burglary proof frames etc.

Most of these items are out of tune with aesthetics as they lack proper design and finishing that will make them stand the test of time. The study also revealed that metal workers in Kogi State make use of predominantly crude implements and manual labour in production and as such their products are limited in quality and quantity hence cannot satisfy market demands and cannot compete with their imported counterparts.

As a result of these and many other issues raised in this discussion, the metal workers in Kogi state are in a state of perpetual poverty hence they are not self-reliant. In a similar development, Amadi (2007) carried out a study on the extent to which the Industrial Development Centres (IDCs) have been able to generate technical change in the fabrication and sheet metal work in Benue state in the year 2007. The population of the study was 50 entrepreneurs in the metal working sector. Data for the study was gathered through direct interview and analysed using percentage of satisfaction of the operators on the activities of the IDCs in trying to enhance their productivity in Benue state as a case study. The findings of the study revealed that while most of the entrepreneurs were satisfied with the activities of the IDCs, which include business management and entrepreneurial training, the metal workers were less satisfied with the IDCs technical services. For instance, about 80% of the population expressed dissatisfaction with the technical advice to improve on the design and quality of their products due to lack of skills.

The findings of these and many other studies are proofs to the fact that small-sale metal work industrialists in north central Nigeria are conservative and not willing to embrace modern modes of production. This, to a very large extent, has limited their scope of production and at the same time stunted their economic empowerment and contribution to the technological advancement of Nigeria. This, and many other issues raised in this discussion, in the opinion of the discussant, must be controlled in order to make TVET achieve the much expected objectives in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the issues raised in this discussion, it can be concluded that the smallscalemetal work industry operators in North Central Nigeria are in abject poverty due to the poor quality and quantities of their products. These industrialists virtually lack the skills required to add values to their products by enhancing their aesthetic qualities hence their products cannot compete favorably with their imported counterparts. In order to reverse this situation, it is important to expose the metal work industry operators In North Central Nigeria, to a robust TVET programmes in schools and colleges in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world. This is imperative in order to empower the youths to be self-employed so as to reduce the rate of unemployment and underemployment that is currently over whelming the youths and ravaging the economy of the entire society in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In order to evolve a functional Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for the empowerment of the youths, including the small-scale metal work industry operators in the north central Nigeria, the following recommendation are made:

- 1. Government should review her current policy on TVET and key-in properly into the world reforms on preparing TVET educators for the next generation.
- 2. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) should be made compulsory to all youths in Nigeria after secondary school as this will ensure that they are equipped with functional skills for self-reliance
- 3. Parents should send their children to TVET institutions to acquire skills that will enable them to be functional in the society even in the absence of government white-collar-jobs
- 4. Special TVET Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) should be created to cater for the problems of TVET at all levels in Nigeria.
- 5. Government should, as a matter of urgency, raise her current budgetary

- allocation to education to international standards so as to make TVET and other educational developments possible.
- 6. Cottage industries should be established across Nigeria especially in rural area in order to build industries closer to the industrialists in these areas
- 7. Power supply is of paramount importance to TVET hence schools and colleges should provide independent power supply to TVET departments
- 8. To ensure proper empowerment of the youths, and global relevance, TVET departments should be equipped with mini-industries that can produce quality consumer goods and services.
- 9. Existing industries in the country should collaborate with TVET institutions by accepting their products for training after school, to enable them acquire enough skill that can make them to be absorbed by the company or establish their own businesses.
- 10. To update TVET institutions so as to empower the youths to be relevant in the globalised world economy of our time/ TVET institutions' workshops and laboratories should be equipped with digitalized machines and equipments for the production, of modern goods and services
- 11. Regular in-service training in developed countries should be granted and sponsored for all TVET educators at all levels. This is important in order to expose TVET educators to modern industrial practices in developed countries.
- 12. Industrial protection laws should be put in place to protect local industries in Nigeria as local industries cannot stand open competition with foreign industries yet.
- 13. Bank of industries should extend their activities to the small-scale industrialists especially in the rural areas in North Central Nigeria in order to carry them along
- 14. In order to encourage the metal working industries and others in Nigeria, the

- Ajaokuta Steel Company should be totally completed and commissioned.
- 15. Agents of technical change in the country such as the Industrial Development Cooperations (IDCs), United Nations' Organization Development Industrial (UNIDO), Central Bank of Nigeria, Bank of Industries, (BOI) etc should embark on mass-mobilization of the small-scale industrialists in Nigeria through capacity building, and awareness creation to enable them enhance the

qualities and quantities of their products to stand international competition. The above suggestions, among other things are sacrosanct in order to re-position TVET for the empowerment of the youths and the operators of small scale metalwork industries in north central Nigeria for optimal performance, and contribution to the economic and technological advancement of the region and Nigeria in general.

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