Functional Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET): A Catalyst for Youth Empowerment and National Security in Nigeria

Dr. T. C. Ogbuanya; Obiajulu Loretta Obierika

1Department Of Vocational Technical Education, University Of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State
2Department Of Building Technology Education, Federal College Of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State

Togbuanya@Yahoo.Com; Obiloretta@Gmail.Com

Abstract

Training in areas of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) is significantly essential for social, political and economic development of any nation. The potential role which Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays in providing practical skills, basic and scientific knowledge and attitudes which enhance individual usefulness in the society cannot be quantified. It bridges the gap between theoretical lessons taught in the classroom and what is being practiced on the job. A functional TVET programme is capable of promoting youth empowerment, national security and reducing unemployment situation in the country. Based on this premise, this paper discussed the state of TVET and unemployment, the concept of functional TVET, youth empowerment, national security, TVET vis-à-vis youth empowerment and national security, and Government contribution to youth empowerment. This paper concluded that TVET is one of the most important mechanisms for youth empowerment and national security.

Keywords: Nigeria, Functional TVET, Youth Empowerment, National Security.

Introduction

Education remains the best tool to develop physical, mental and moral capability of the youth so that he/she can become a good, industrious and self reliant individual in the society. UNESCO (2004) observed that there are over 1 billion young people between the ages of 15 – 24 in the world today, which amounts to about 15.4% of the total world's population. Also Ayuba (2014) opined that since education is considered the key to effective development strategies, TVET must be the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all, and achieve national sustainable development. UNESCO (2001) viewed TVET as a comprehensive term involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge related to occupation in various sectors in economic and social life. According to Mclean and David (2009) technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work, to increase opportunities for productive empowerment and socio-economic development in knowledge, economics and rapidly changing work environment. Oke, Adenle and Shobowale (2010) also defined TVET as a programme designed to impart theory and practical training skills to the recipient. They stated that the society needs more people to
establish viable businesses that will help cushion the adverse effect of mass unemployment, early retiring of men and women from services, abject poverty, and violence.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has been recognized as an impetus for economic development both for the developed and developing countries of the world. At a time when the shrinking job market is a global phenomenon, TVET for all and for life may provide an answer to the growing unemployment, especially in a developing country like Nigeria because of its empowerment ability.

Adenle and Shoibowale (2009) pointed out that TVET exposes the learners to acquire demonstrative skills that could be transformed into economic benefits.

Youth empowerment is crucial to sustainable national security, because when youths are empowered by equipping them with employable skills they will be engaged and will eschew violence and embrace peace. The term youth varies in its significance and age range from culture to culture. It may universally be defined as a transitional concept. Adenle and Raheem (2010) viewed youth as a very specific stage between childhood and adulthood, when people have to negotiate a complex interplay of both personal and socio-economic changes in order to manoeuvre the transition from dependence to independence, take effective control of their own lives and assume social commitments. TVET as a vehicle for the achievement of youth empowerment and national security enables the youth to appreciate the need for work and develop appropriate attitudes towards work.

TVET can take place either in formal schools (i.e. through secondary or technical colleges), and increasingly in post-secondary institutions or informally by means of apprenticeship training at workplace and increasingly by distant learning. Since the primary objective of TVET programme is to prepare individuals in a manner that enables them acquire the necessary skills for paid job or self employment in a specific occupation; it has been acclaimed as one of the best measures to provide employment (Empowerment) to economically challenged citizens worldwide. Uddin (2013) stated that TVET is any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare beneficiaries for gainful employment in an occupation or group of occupations.

However the societal misconception that TVET is meant for dropouts in academic, or that it is mere arts and crafts, or typing and office practice, has made TVET unpopular. The main objectives of TVET in the National Policy on Education (2004) is the inculcation of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge in students for useful living in the society. Ochu (2006) stated that TVET of the populace is significant because it plays the role of transforming the socio-economic status of any nation by inculcating in the people sound knowledge, practical skills, attitudes, and understanding with which they can translate acquired knowledge into real socio-economic transformation.

Inspite of the stated objective of TVET in Nigeria, the country seemed unprepared for it. This statement derived its relevance from observations in the educational system especially when you pay a visit to any educational institution which offers technical vocational education. In some secondary schools, technical colleges, colleges of education (technical), polytechnics and even universities, workshop buildings are not in existence let alone equipment and training materials for workshop practice. Even where there are workshops, equipment and training materials, the equipment are either obsolete or not functioning at all.

The scenario above is in line with the observation of Obierika (2014) who stated that many of the technical/ vocational institutions lacked workshops and laboratories, and where workshops and laboratories are available, there are no tools, equipment and training materials to carry out practicals. Where tools and equipment are available they are obsolete and not at par with what is obtainable in the real world of work.
There is, therefore, a gap between the objective of TVET as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) and what is currently obtainable in our institutions. This state of affairs has resulted in the rising rate of graduate unemployment.

Gwadabe (2001) defined unemployment as a situation where a person is available, willing and able to work but could not find a job in a government, private sector or cannot be self-employed. In Nigeria today employment opportunities have apparently become elusive to many youths. This situation is evident in the steady rate at which graduates roam the streets and the situation is made worse by the massive rural-urban drift in search of non-existent jobs. The possession of a certificate from any of our tertiary institutions can no longer guarantee success in the job market. Yet each year, our institutions of learning are turning out an increasing number of graduates without employment prospects. Nwosu (2004) maintained that graduate unemployment is deleterious to the social and economic health of a nation.

Gojo (2010) stated that in recent times, only 40% of graduates of tertiary institutions across Nigeria are able to secure paid jobs in public sector after five years of graduation. This undoubtedly, is counterproductive to the national security of a nation. This awkward and monstrous trend can effectively be stalled through functional TVET in Nigeria.

It is pertinent to note that the successful completion of an effective/functional TVET programme normally leads to vocational qualification that is relevant to the labour market and recognized by the relevant authorities and employers in the country in which it is obtained (UNESCO 2007). By implication, TVET delivery system has the potential to train and provide the skilled workforce that the nation needs, and in the process create employment for the youths, thereby eradicating poverty, under-development, technological backwardness and promote national security (Audu, Karim and Balast 2013). Therefore the concern of this paper is to discuss how functional TVET will serve as a panacea for youth empowerment and national security.

Functional TVET

Functional TVET is an essential tool for youth empowerment and national security. Uzuagulu (2004) explained that functionality has to do with effectiveness, efficiency and workability of something or organization. According to him, a functional education system must be effective in achieving its set goals. Also Asogwa (2004) stated that the functionality of a system is the practicability and usefulness of that system being very suitable for the purpose it was set to achieve.

TVET as seen by FRN (2004) are those aspects of the educational processes involving the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economic and social life. Therefore, functional TVET is an education (formal or informal) requiring hand-on-experiences/skills acquired by students/trainees as a result of their exposure to the use of tools, machines, equipment and training materials in workshops and laboratories while learning a trade, craft or other practical vocations.

Functional and responsive TVET is made possible when there is availability of well built workshops and laboratories, provision of tools, machines and equipment that are relevant, training materials as well as competent instructors to teach the required skills. Also, provision of constant electric power supply is needed to power the machines and equipment. This is because the availability of workshops, laboratories, tools machines, equipment, training materials and competent instructors will not avail much without electric power supply.

Youth Empowerment

A youth can be regarded as an individual between adolescent age and adulthood and
between the ages of 18 and 35, although this age range varies from culture to culture. This category of people are regarded as the future leaders and the strength of any society. They are the most active, volatile (socially, economically) and in many other aspects, yet the most vulnerable segment of the population. This group of people, however, have certain qualities; they are more critical, full of ambitions and ideas. Amuchezi (1995) observed that no society can effectively develop socio-economically and politically without harnessing and utilizing its youths. Youths, if correctly guided, properly mobilized, well empowered and fully integrated into the social fabric of the nation have valuable services to the struggle for liberation and national development. They also constitute a threat to national survival and stability if they are not properly engaged. Therefore, no nation can afford to ignore the empowerment of her youths.

Empowerment also means strengthening somebody or something that lacks the ability to control circumstances either socially, economically, politically, traditionally or custom-wise with relevant materials, services, knowledge or opportunities so as to change/improve situations, by himself/herself (Alaka 2005). Okumagba (2005) observed that empowerment is to reach the poor and the marginalized of the society for example, the poor farmers who live on marginal land or small holder agriculture throughout the world, the unemployed and the dispossessed among the urban, the mother and child among the poor, with practical and entrepreneurial skills.

Quisumbing and Joy (2005) summarized youth empowerment as consisting of both social and economic benefits equitably shared, security and self-sufficiency within the family, the community and a general sense of well being about oneself and others. Furthermore, they opined that youth empowerment can only be sustained when there is continuity, and when it provides for the welfare of both the present and future generations. Muazu and Ona (2013) defined youth empowerment as deliberate policies of government and other relevant stakeholders to address the needs of youths as core partners for societal transformation. We must appreciate the fact that youths remain the catalyst for national development and security and the best way to address the multiple challenges confronting them is to empower them to be self reliant and independent. Through coordinated and sustained empowerment programmes, their minds will be taken off the evils that engage them.

National Security

The development of any nation is linked to her national security. This is because no meaningful progress can be made in a nation that is ravaged with violence. No wonder a substantial amount of the budget of nations is usually devoted to security. In Nigeria, a large amount is included in the yearly budget (security vote) which is controlled by chief executives at both federal and state levels. Despite the efforts and large sums of money allocated for security, nations are experiencing one form of security challenge or the other.

National security, according to Wikipedia encyclopedia (2012) is a concept that a government, along with its parliaments, should protect the state and its citizens against all kind of "national" crises through a variety of power projections, such as political power, diplomacy, economic power, military might, and so on.

Linda (2008) stated that the term security has to do with the quality of statehood and its relationship to the degree of poverty and inequality. The higher the poverty level in a country, the higher the likelihood of insecurity. National security can be classified into military security, economic security, resources security, border security, demographic security, disaster security, energy security, geostategic security, information security, food security, health security, ethnic security, environmental security, cyber security and genomic security (Wikipedia 2012).
The question to ask then is, "Who are those that are being used as instruments of violence and who are their sponsors?" Obviously, the unemployed and unempowered youths constitute available instruments in the hands of those that have control over them psychologically, economically and otherwise.

It is the view of this paper that nations should have a broad based perspective on national security; where government and other stakeholders should place great emphasis on provision of basic social amenities, tackling high rate of unemployment, food security and addressing the issue of corruption and, of course, provision of a functional education. However, the conventional security agencies and their apparatus are also essential for national security. Also within this broad perspective, government should emphasize and encourage religious leaders to preach peace to their teeming followers.

**TVET Vis-a-vis Youth Empowerment and National Security**

Training is the process of teaching a person or an animal to perform a particular job or skill well, or to behave in a particular way, by regular instruction and practice (Hornby 2000). Training, according to Cinterfor (2001) is a central pillar of decent employment. There must be a training given by an instructor to a trainee in order for him (trainee) to grasp the tasks or sequences leading to the end product of empowerment for job. Somavia (2001) stated that training heightens one’s abilities to compete favourably in the market place and keep up with new technological skill. ILO (2000) elucidated that education and training help to empower people, improve the quality and organization of work, raise workers incomes, improve enterprise competitiveness, promote job security and social equity.

By way of broadening the scope, it could be rightly said that in Nigeria, TVET is available at various levels of education. At the primary school level, it is expected to provide the child with basic tool for further educational advancement. However instead of collecting materials for the preparation of items such as clay products, weaved baskets, brooms, etc as handwork, teachers nowadays collect toilet roll or just any finished product as evidence of handwork. At the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level, provisions are made for pre-vocational subjects such as Basic Science and Technology, Business Studies, Agriculture and Home Economics. The Senior Secondary School (SSS) is comprehensive with vocational subjects like Blocklaying, Bricklaying and Concrete Work, Carpentry and Joinery, Welding and Fabrication, Office Practice etc.

Also, at the technical college level, various skills are acquired and certificates awarded at the end of three years of training. Examinations are conducted by the National Business and Technical Education Board (NABTEB). At the tertiary level, Colleges of Education (Technical), Polytechnics and Monotechnics, and Universities offer various forms of TVET, leading to the award of Nigeria Certificate of Education after 3 years, Ordinary National Diploma after two years, Higher National Diploma after another two years and Bachelor degree in Technical Education after four years of study. Also it is mandatory for all students enrolled in TVET programmes at the tertiary level to take part in Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). TVET serves as a passport for empowerment, and the right to decent employment fundamentally depends on training received. Lack of this training (empowerment) for any youth or individual constitutes danger or problem not only to the person but also to the society.

There is definitely a strong link between youth empowerment and national security. Once youths are not given quality attention by the government, there is bound to be youth restiveness which constitutes some forms of national security embarrassment. The quick alternative to lack of employment by youths in our contemporary time is to resort to crime and violence because the idle mind is the devils workshop. This argument is supported by Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart.
(2011) who reported that violence of youths during the 2011 elections claimed 800 lives and displaced 65,000 people.

Youths must be introduced to programmes which can take them off our streets and engage their minds, intellect and creativity towards meaningful ventures which could provide some form of self-employment for them. Functional TVET therefore, is an engine for human resources development, and infact a missing link in any nation’s development, particularly Nigeria (Dike, 2005). TVET can contribute to youth empowerment and national security in the following ways:-

- TVET will reduce the rate of unemployment among youths as they will acquire basic skills and right attitudes that will make them useful to themselves and the society.
- TVET will increase the workforce of Nigeria as well as the world labour market.
- The economy of a nation increases and is sufficient when there is effective production of goods and services, which can result from the empowerment of youth with the right basic skills, right attitude and understanding through functional TVET.
- Youth empowerment through TVET contributes to the achievement of societal goals of great demonetarization, social, cultural and economic development while at the same time developing the potentials of youth.
- TVET also will develop the youth to appreciate the need for work, to develop appropriate attitude toward work and to contribute to the sustainable environment through their occupation.

Promotion of TVET programmes by all stakeholders is essential for youth empowerment and national security in order to achieve the objectives of such programmes. Such promotional activities that will enhance TVET programmes include the following:

1) Content and skills should be made relevant to the learner.
2) Learning should take place in authentic and real-world of work environment.
3) Content and skills should be understood within the framework of the learner’s prior knowledge.
4) Students should be assessed formatively, serving to inform future learning.
5) Teachers should serve primarily as guides and facilitators of learning.

**Government Contributions to Youth Empowerment**

TVET could be regarded as key to wealth creation and youth empowerment due to its orientation toward the world of work and the major emphasis of its curriculum is the acquisition of employable skills. Its delivery systems emphasize the production of skilled and entrepreneurial workforce which the nations need to create wealth and come out of poverty. This is why technical and vocational skill acquisition is central in virtually all youth empowerment programmes as a key to solving youth unemployment.

At the international level, various youth empowerment programmes have been carried out. For instance in 2007, the United Nations empowered youths of an informal settlement in a slum area in Nairobi spending 100,000 US Dollars which was awarded by Pong Chung Scholarship Foundation (UN-HABITAT 2009). Also in another youth empowerment programme, a two year partnership led by Microsoft to improve the employable skills of disadvantaged African youths, ages 16 to 35, provided a demand-driven training on information and communication technology (ICT), life skills, entrepreneurship and employment services (UN-HABITAT 2009).

In Nigeria, government at various levels came up with various programmes aimed at empowering the youths. They include: National Directorate of Employment
(NDE), Vocational Skills Development (VSD), Small-Scale Entrepreneurship (SSE), Rural Employment Programme (REP), Public Works and Women/Youth Employment (PW/WYE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Capacity Enhancement Scheme (CES), Work for Yourself Programme (WFYP), Youth Empowerment and Vocational Skills Development Programme (YEVSDP), Small and Medium Entrepreneurial Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and the most recent by this past administration is ‘YOU WIN’ project. It seems that these programmes did not address poverty as stated in the goals.

**National Directorate of Employment (NDE).**

The National Directorate of employment (NDE) is a Nigerian government initiative which was established in 1986, and launched in January 1987 with the objective-to design an employment programme, to combat mass unemployment, articulate policies aimed at developing work programme with labour intensive potential, eliminate unemployment and create job opportunities to the general society at large. In order to achieve the above goals, NDE embarked on activities to obtain and maintain data bank on employment and vacancies in the country with a view to acting as a clearing house to link job seekers with vacancies in collaboration with other government agencies, to put in place programmes that will fight unemployment and make job available for the masses and to organize seminars/conferences to empower the jobless.

However, the implementation of these programmes and activities by NDE is not without some challenges and failures. These include:

- **Low productivity.** NDE’s objective to make job available (recruitment) for the masses could not be achieved due to low productivity, and so they were unable to provide sufficient jobs for the masses.
- **Low Moral** is another challenge. Low moral among organizations has made it difficult for the activities of NDE to eliminate unemployment, rather the level of unemployment is still high in the nation. This shows that NDE as an agency has not been able to perform and function to the expectation of the people.

**National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP).** NAPEP was established in 2001 by the Nigerian government with the aim of reducing poverty. Its goals include training youths in vocational trades, support internship, support micro-credit, create employment in the automobile industry and help Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF) patients. Wohlmuth, Alabi and Burger (2008) in Oni (2013) stated that NAPEP has been able to train 130,000 youths and engaged 216,000 persons; however most of the beneficiaries were not poor.

**YOUTH ENTERPRISE INNOVATION IN NIGERIA (YOUWIN)**

YOUWIN was launched on 11\textsuperscript{th} October 2011 by President Goodluck Jonathan. YOUWIN is a Federal Government initiative aimed at tackling youth unemployment in the country through provision of funding to support the entrepreneurial ideas and innovations of about 1,200 selected youth graduates of tertiary institutions and creating in the process between 80,000 and 110,000 jobs over a period of three years. As at September 2012, 1200 winners had emerged from the six geo-political zones of the country and 1,172 of them had received the first tranche of their grants. According to the former finance minister, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, no fewer than 22,000 jobs had been created by 2,400 winners of the first and second editions of YOUWIN. No failures have been stated as it is still new and ongoing.

**Conclusion**

Youth empowerment must be taken seriously by government if such a government wants to have peace, stability and sustainable national development. Government can only neglect the youths at their own peril. Tochukwu (2007) stated that youths are leaders of tomorrow. Therefore
attention must be given to any meaningful empowerment of the youths through functional programmes. The relevance of TVET for youth empowerment and national security cannot be over-emphasized. Specifically, the acquisition of basic skills, knowledge and right attitude to the world of work which is geared towards achieving self respect, income earning and social contact is the only tool for the reduction of youth unemployment. This view was supported by Oguntoy (2004) when he asserted that the only ways out of youth unemployment are the creation of new ideas and approaches. Developmental programmes for youth employment need to be practical, low-cost and efficient, and they need to use locally available resources. Therefore TVET is seen as a very important mechanism and the most effective means for youth empowerment and national security.

**Recommendations**

In order to ensure that functional TVET acts as a catalyst for youth empowerment and national security, certain strong interventions are needed. The following are recommendations necessary for youth empowerment and national security:

1) TVET programmes should be given serious emphasis by government and all other stakeholders as they will lead to empowerment and self employment.

2) Various youth empowerment programmes should be properly monitored and supervised in order to achieve their set goals.

3) Youth empowerment programmes should be adequately funded by government and well meaning individuals in order to ensure adequate provision of quality equipment and facilities.

4) Qualified, competent and well motivated teachers should be employed to teach the various subjects or courses in all our institutions of learning as this will lead to proper training which will make our youths employable, reduce unemployment and its attendant vices of armed robbery, hooliganism, etc that bother on insecurity.

5) TVET institutions should be strengthened to admit more students as this will lead to empowerment of more youths which would in the long run promote national security.

6) School industry base relationship should be greatly encouraged by government and other stakeholders.

7) Youths should be encouraged to develop a positive mindset toward TVET if they must become enterprising and make meaningful contribution to national development.

8) Government must have youth empowerment programmes which are practicable, consistent and continuous.

9) The private sector should be encouraged to participate fully in supporting TVET programmes.

10) Other countries should be encouraged to site industries in Nigeria as this will aid empowerment and national security.

**References**


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