



Developing the Youth through Technical Vocational Education and Training for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is a country characterized with natural resources in its abundance which can cater for the well-being of the citizens, yet the citizens especially the youths are living below poverty level as many are victims of unemployment and cannot offer meaningful and positive contribution to the development of the nation. The unemployment rate is as a result of the abandonment of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) that can offer skills to the youths for self-reliance and employment. In this vein, this paper seeks to address how a developed TVET programme can develop the youths in order to build the nation for sustainable national development in Nigeria. The following outlines provide a guide to the content of this paper; the concept of sustainable development, the meaning of TVET and its role in sustainable development, how to develop TVET for sustainable development in Nigeria. Others were the definition of youth and the concept of TVET for youth development. The researcher suggests that TVET can be developed for sustainable development in Nigeria through making a flexible TVET policies, establishment of TVET special training centres on local basis, improvement of the linkages between training institutions and the industries, provision of adequate training facilities, giving of grants to individual who successfully complete TVET training, granting of soft loans to established business, establishment and effective management of financial institutions such as Micro-Finance Banks,

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Bank of Industries (BOI), employment in both public. The implementation of these strategies will enhance the development and sustainability of TVET programmes in Nigeria. Based on the discussion made in this paper, the study recommends that the period of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) should be converted to be a compulsory training period for all graduates on different types and kinds of TVET skills. For non-graduates youths, there should be a skill training organized and supervised through government agencies such as Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and other commissions, Government should grant soft loan to those venturing into TVET as this will enable the establishment of the acquire skills. Also, loan should be given to graduates who have completed a training programme for easy establishment.

Keywords: Skill acquisition; sustainable development; TVET; unemployment; youth.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a country is endowed with natural resources that can contribute to national development. It is a nation that is endowed with many youths who are the prime movers of any form of development (political, economic, social, cultural etc.). The development of any nation depends on the workforce available and the extent to which the workforce is viable and capable. According to www.tradingeconomics.com, youth unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 25.20 percent in the fourth quarter of 2016 from 25 percent in the third quarter of 2016. The [1], asserted that the total population of the youth (15-35 years) is about 64,086,797. Out of this population, about 16149873 Nigerian youths are unemployed. If these large populations of the group suffer and become victims of unemployment, how would the nation move forward and sustain its development when the youths are the engine for development? These youths that are not engaged in any activity are morally, politically, economically, socially, psychologically and culturally depressed, which is dangerous to the entire society as their actions of anti-social activities pose a threat to the nation's economy. Also, they cannot contribute meaningfully to the development and sustainability of the country's economy.

In order to make them useful, meaningful and to be an active partner in the nation's economy, they must be employed and empowered. Through this, the youth can contribute to building and sustaining the nation. Youth as defined by the [2], is any individual who is a citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, between the ages of 18-35 years. The National Youths Policy affirms that the extent of the youth's *"responsible conduct and roles in society is positively correlated with the development of their country [3]"*. This is true because the youths constitute

about 33% of the entire Nigerian population [4] which when they are fully integrated into the society through knowledge utilization, skill training for empowerment and employment have the ability to skyrocket the nation positively.

The slogan of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) is stated thus *"Build the Youth, Build the Nation"*. In other words, if the nation must be developed, the youth must first be developed because they are the corner stone that determines the economic developmental shape and structure of that nation. Youth development can be by engaging them through empowerment or employment processes. Youths' empowerment and employment can be realized through developing a well organized Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) to offer skill acquisition for self reliance and development. [5] asserts TVET as a comprehensive term involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge related to occupation in various sectors in economic and social life. According to Mclean and David [6], 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. Based on this, if TVET is develop for the youths to key into the programmes, the nations' economy will be developed and sustained through the contribution of the youths using skills and knowledge acquired from TVET. According to Deebom and Zite [7], one obvious means of meeting the economic needs of the society is by training the youth and giving them some industrial or commercial skills as a means of livelihood. The National Youths Development Policy recognizes that the youths are key resources that can be tapped for the benefit of

the whole country. It also asserts that youths are the foundation of a society as their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through the youths' creative talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. This also leads to national sustainable development. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) [8] defined sustainable development as the management and conservation of the natural resources base and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generation. By this definition, TVET and the youths are now seen to play an integral role for the attainment of sustainable development. At this point, the researcher deems it necessary to examine whether developing a well organized TVET programmes can build the youth in order for them to develop the nation through their contributions, innovations and ideas. It is no longer a mere cliché that the youths are the leaders of tomorrow. They are also the prime mover of any developed economy. The question to be asked is "How can Nigerian youths move and develop the economy when they are not developed? This was discussed by [9] who opined that poverty and its symptoms dominate as majority of the youths lack the skills for employment or self-employment. Developing the youth simply means making them to be self-reliant through empowerment or employment. This could be realized through TVET which is the only education that offers skills and knowledge. For instance, Mark Elliot Zuckerberg, the founder and inventor of the most populous social network (Facebook), who at the age of 20 launched Facebook on February 4, 2004 which have to sustaining his country's economy (United States) through his skills, talents and knowledge acquired which are the essential ingredients of TVET. Also, Ukrainian, Jan Koum who at the age of 33 years in 2009 launched and became the founder of WhatsApp, a mobile messaging application for communication has sustained the economy of Ukraine through skills and knowledge. This study intends to answer the following questions:

- What is sustainable development?
- What is TVET and what might be its role in sustainable development?
- What are the best TVET strategies for sustainable development?
- Who are the youths?

- What is TVET for youth development?

2. THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

According to Ahiakwo [10], to sustain means "to provide enough of what somebody needs in order to live or exist". A sustainable situation involves "the use of natural products and energy in a way that does not harm the environment". Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is that "Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need" [11]. The draft post-2015 agenda proposes 17 goals to promote well-being for all at all ages. According to the agenda, some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were to:

- ✓ End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- ✓ End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
- ✓ Promote and sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
- ✓ Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- ✓ Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.
- ✓ Conserve and sustainability use the oceans, sea and marine resources for sustainable development.
- ✓ Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development [12].

Also, TVET is understood to contribute to sustainable development. In this context, the UNESCO-UNEVOC Bonn Declaration on Learning for Work, Citizenship and Sustainability in 2004 stated that "since education is considered the key to effective development strategies, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) then must be the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development" [13]. The concept of sustainable development has been defined in many widely differing ways. One of such broadly accepted definitions is that of Brundtland commission report in 1987 in [14], which defined sustainable

development as a new form of developmental perspective which integrates the production process with resources conservation and environmental enhancement to meet the needs of the present without compromising our ability to meet those of the future. Furthermore, [15] posited that sustainable development is a continuous and progressive increase and expansion of the volume of goods and services provided in a given economy with improvement in the social, political and economic life of present as well as future generation. To this end, [16] argued that sustainable development is inherently a value-laden concept, in that it implies responsibility for both present and future generation. TVET is a sure way for achieving a sustainable development through inculcating the youths that has the innovation, stamina in moving and making the economy more productive and competitive.

3. THE MEANING OF TVET AND ITS ROLE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) means different things to different people from a general perspective. To some people, it means a non-formal training mainly for school dropouts that cannot survive in formal university training. For others, it is a programme that is used to train semi-skilled labour. TVET from a general and professional point of view is a formal training needed by all. It is an education program that is organized to orient people into skills acquisition, and as well teach them the attitude and knowledge necessary for the appropriate utilization of such skills. Also, it is education designated to develop specific occupational skills [17]. According to Adenle and Shobowale [18], TVET exposes the learners to the acquisition of demonstrative skills that could be transformed into economic benefits. The [19] on TVET for the twenty-first century, defined TVET as:

“those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skill, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life”.

From the above definition, TVET prepares an individual for skilful performance on practical task. It involves the acquisition of skills and competencies that can help individuals to

function productively in industrial and commercial occupations [20]. It is a training characterized by the element of sustainable development. Today, TVET is increasingly recognized globally as an effective means of empowering young people to engage in productive and sustainable livelihoods. Sustainable development is about the development of individuals and that of the society and national economy. TVET empowerment improves a nation's economy, provides job opportunities, can contribute to reduction in crime rates and encourages creativity and competitiveness in nation-building. TVET facilitates the adjustment of the skills and knowledge of man to the changing demands within the society. Skill and knowledge as well as social values acquired through TVET allow an individual to manipulate the natural and physical environment for making life more useful for improved sustainable scientific, technological and economic development [21]. Thus, TVET and sustainable development are inevitably connected. TVET as a programme has an essential role to play in raising awareness, and providing skills and values considered necessary to put sustainable development into practice. As a goal, sustainable development lies at the heart of the TVET system, and become the platform among the society it serves [22]. In the new economic environment therefore, TVET is expected to produce an educated, skilled and motivated workforce for sustainable development and nation's growth. Today, TVET is increasingly recognized globally as effective means of empowering young people to engage in productive and sustainable livelihoods.

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 in [23] viewed youth as a very specific stage between childhood and adulthood, when people have to negotiate a complex interplay of both personal and socioeconomic changes in order to manoeuvre the ‘transition’ from dependence to independence, take effective control of their own lives and assume social commitments. The National Youths Policy recognizes that the youths are a key resource that can be tapped for the benefit of the whole country.

4. HOW TO DEVELOP TVET FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Though TVET system in Nigeria like other African countries is threatened with many challenges, one of such major problems upon which other problems seem to emanate from is that of image of TVET. Evidence from studies indicates that many youths, parents and even government perceive TVET as not valuable as a general education [24,25,26]. This negative view has grossly discouraged many young people from enrolling into TVET programmes, undermining the importance of this form of education to national and sustainable development.

It has been noted that TVET provides the needed employable skills and attitudes required for job performance at the workplace. It can be perceived that the world of TVET constitutes technical education and vocational education. Technical education is defined as a formal training that enables the application of the techniques of applied sciences and mathematical principles for the services of mankind; whereas vocational education is the educational preparations and training provided to individuals to enable them become specifically qualified for a particular vocation [27]. argued that while technical education is aimed at nurturing skills and practical development of an individual, vocational education is imbued with strict adherence to guiding principles for effective professional performance in an occupational field. TVET therefore is defined by [5] as those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic life.

The researcher suggests that TVET can be developed for sustainable development in Nigeria through making a flexible TVET policies, establishment of TVET special training centres on local basis, improving the linkages between training institutions and the industries, provision of adequate training facilities, giving of grants to individual who successfully complete TVET training, granting of soft loans to established business, establishment and effective management of financial institutions such as Micro-Finance Banks, Bank of Industries (BOI), and employment in both public and private

sectors. The implementation of these strategies will enhance the development and sustainability of TVET programmes in Nigeria.

5. WHO ARE THE YOUTHS?

Youth is a period which is important in the development of any nation as well as a sensitive period for the individual youth and by extension, the society and nation as a whole. Youth are not only actual leaders in some role or the other but are also future potential leaders and are actually the greatest investment in any country's development. The extent to which the youth of any nation possesses intelligence, responsibility, creativity and patriotism determines the potentials of a nation for development. The way in which a nation defines its youth is related to the objective conditions and realities that exist in its immediate environment. By way of definition in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a youth is defined as a citizen of Nigeria of aged between 18-35 years [1]. This age bracket represents the most active, dependable and yet vulnerable segment of the country's population socio-economically, emotionally and in other respect. Also, the youth policy defines the youths as all young persons of the ages 18-35 years. Predominantly, Nigeria's population is characterized with youths occupying a high percentage of its population.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics [28] of National Population Census [1], the total population of the youth (15-35 years) is about 64,086,797 while youth of age bracket (18-35 years) was about 52,183,686. For the purpose of this paper, Nigerian youths are citizen of Nigerian between the ages of 18-35 years which form about 52 million persons; with 24,548,835 (47.2%) being males and 27,634,852 (52.8%) being females out of an entire population of about 140,003,542 persons. The youths thus constitute about 37.3% of the total population. This is equivalent to one youth out of every three Nigerians. They are the backbone of the development of the country. Indeed, if Nigeria is to be sustained as a viable entity, there must be a very good plan to tap the energy and resourcefulness of the youth population to fast track national economic development of the country through TVET [29]. The National Youths Policy recognizes that the youths are a key resource that can be tapped for the benefit of the whole country. As earlier pointed out, the youth has a crucial role to play in the efforts of achieving national and sustainable development

anywhere in the world. The place and importance of the youth in the development process is aptly described by the National Youth Policy in this way:

“Youth are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have. Not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, they are potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country’s development. They serve as a good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce as well as sustain itself. The extent of their vitality, responsible conduct, and roles in society is positively correlated with the development of their country” [3].

Youths of a nation serve as the building blocks that link the past with the present. The youths represent the future and the hope of every society and this has been more apt in Nigeria especially if taken in the context of the country’s 50 years of nationhood [30]. However, the youth being a vulnerable group with peculiar but unmet needs and aspirations, majority of them faces several problems which include unemployment, underemployment, and poverty among others. These have hampered sustainable development as they cannot meaningfully contribute to the economic viability of the nation due to lack of skills for self-employment, paid employment and empowerment. This was evidenced as [31] and [32] opined that lack of productive and marketable TVET skills has been identified as the major cause of unemployment as many youths are not adequately prepared to fit into the productive sector of the economy and cannot provide the services that can generate sustainable income.

6. CONCEPT OF TVET FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The development of the youth depends on their readiness and the availability of the programmes that can enhance such development. Youth development cannot be achieved without proper integration and incorporation of programmes for empowerment and employment. This is certain because development is the end product of empowerment and employment. From the above assertion, it is convince that Nigerian youths needs TVET as the only platform that can usher in place the desire and expected development through empowerment and employment. It is a form of education that aims at self-reliance and sustainability. Technical and vocational

education is a form of education designed to equip the learners (youths) for gainful employment and empowerment. It is also that part of education that provides the skills, knowledge and attitude necessary for effective employment in specific occupations. According to [33], TVET is the most reliable vehicle for self sustenance, economic prosperity and political supremacy of a nation over others since it prepares an individual for employment in any industry for specialization. By this, it implies that it will make the youth flexible and employable in the labour market. A graduate of TVET must be possess skills, attitude, and knowledge needed in the industry. It is important to know that the world today has advanced to a point where a degree alone cannot give employment. It is a period where skills will set apart an individual out of mix-multitude hunting and searching for a particular job. A well organized TVET programme will actually bring about youths’ development.

According to Sachs (2004) in [34], development is a process where an economy undergoes social and economic transformation leading to a rise in the standard of living, and access to basic amenities for all through knowledge. It is in recognition of the above concept of development that TVET as a means for poverty alleviation should be given utmost priority by government, having in mind the future consequence and task ahead for sustainable development. Technical and vocational education and training plays an essential role in improving the wellbeing of youths and communities. It increases productivity, empowers individuals to become self-reliant and stimulates entrepreneurship. Investors are more willing to invest in a community with strong human resources [35]. Skills development can therefore contribute to strengthening the social links of a community by promoting employment creativity and sustainable means of existence for the youths. By implication, TVET delivery system [36] has the potential to train the skilled workforce that the nation needs and create employment for the youths and emerge out of poverty, underdevelopment and technical backwardness.

7. CONCLUSION

From literature reviewed in this paper, Nigerian youths are still wallowing and languishing in poverty and lack because the nation has not been able to identify the importance of TVET. In as much as the youths are not built, the nation cannot be developed and its effect is that the

national economy cannot be sustained. Papers reviewed show that many developed nations around the world were able to be where they are today because the youths and TVET were simultaneously identified as an instrument for sustainable national development. Nigerian youths are left behind because of poor policy formulation and implementation concerning TVET and its impact on national development. TVET programs suffer poor sponsorship in Nigeria.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above, the following were recommended:

- i. The period of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) should be converted to be a compulsory training period for all graduates on different types and kinds of TVET skills. Internship should be made compulsory in selected special vocational areas. The more versatile and knowledgeable experts or adult educators who could employ a range of learning models, not just competency-based training, should be recruited as instructors in such training centres or industries selected for the purpose.
 - ii. For non-graduate youths, there should be a skill training programme organized and supervised through government agencies such as Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and other commissions. Also, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), philanthropists, public and private industries should venture into organizing free skill training programme for youths' empowerment.
 - iii. There should be synergy between tertiary institutions offering TVET and the industries that can offer practical knowledge on subject area. This linkage could be through the Students' Industrial Attachment Period (SIAP). In this way, theoretical knowledge that seems to be abstract in the classroom will be translated into reality which will enhance easy acquisition of skills in a chosen area of specialization.
 - iv. Government, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Philanthropists and others should partner in providing infrastructural facilities to TVET institutions.
- Also, industries should donate tools, equipment to the institutions as a way of making acquisition of skills easily realizable.
- v. Government, public and private entities should be involved in establishing more registered TVET programmes centres at an affordable and reduce cost of training fee.
 - vi. Government should grant soft loans to those venturing into TVET as this will enable the establishment of the acquire skills. Also, loan should be given to graduates who have completed a training programme for easy establishment.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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