

## **TERTIARY EDUCATION TRUST FUND (TETFUND) AND THE RENAISSANCE OF QUALITY TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: AN EXCERPTION SURVEY**

**Ajigo Ikutal and David Asuquo Edet**

Department of Vocational Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** *The running of Technical and Vocational Educational Education (TVE) in Nigeria's tertiary institutions appear to be one of the bold steps taken towards solving the technical manpower needs of the nation and making her learners self-reliant. This lofty aspiration is no doubt novel especially as the country is rated among the developing nations. Howbeit, the philosophy behind the establishment of TVE is compelling and promises "gold-bearing" returns. Yet, recording milestones in this regard is constantly plagued with intense problems, the chief of which is funding. To tackle this pressure point, therefore, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) was conceived and established as an intervention agency to break the nation free from the vestiges of moribund edifices for teaching and learning, sorry state of instructional materials and equipment, paucity of research and publications, acute shortage of qualified academic staff among other problems. With these as the identified issues, this paper discusses the establishment and management of TETFund, rationale for its setup, the state of TVE in Nigeria's tertiary institutions and the challenges of the agency. The study therefore recommends among others the necessity to dutifully collect and faithfully remit the 2 percent Education Tax imposed on the assessable profit of companies registered in Nigeria which is the primal source of funding to TETFund.*

**KEYWORDS:** Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Renaissance, Technical and Vocational Education (TVE)

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Technical and Vocational Education is a necessary tool for effective living and improvement of the quality of humans' lives and society's advancement. According to Ebeten and Usoro (2017), Technical and Vocational Education is the bedrock of technological, industrial and economic breakthrough in many countries of the world. As such, countries like Japan, Israel, USA, Germany and recently China are classified as emergent world powers today because they promote Technical and Vocational Education. Notably, Eyam and Eyam (2017) asserted that promoting the study of Technical and Vocational Education can lead to the production of competent manpower needed for development.

Reflectively, Onwuchekwa (2010) recalled that through its Employment and Training Act of 1973, Britain addressed her manpower needs with the use of Technical and Vocational Education. The author maintained that developed countries nowadays place emphasis on the need for skilled manpower necessary for economic security. Consequently, because of the unmeasurable importance of skilled manpower and the need for functionality, Technical and Vocational Education has been undertaken in many institutions of learning and training centres in categorized levels to suit the specific objectives sought.

In Nigeria for example, the National Policy on Education (2004) assembled these various levels as: primary education level, where subjects like Home Economics, Handicraft, Computer Education and Agriculture are studied. At the junior secondary level, Technical and Vocational Education is learned as pre-vocational elective subjects, while at the senior secondary level, this all important program is run as vocational elective with many subjects under it. Without controversy, mass literacy, adult and non-formal education given to youths and adults outside the formal school setting equally provide for the study of Technical and Vocational Education. At the tertiary level, Technical and Vocational Education is run at a full fledged scale. The thrust of this vivid description is to enunciate that at either of these levels, if the concern is the teaching and learning of Technical and Vocational Education, then the overriding boarder ought to be the realization of the net benefit of studying the program which according to the National Policy on Education (2004) include to:

1. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology, and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels;
2. Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;
3. Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

The focus of this paper, therefore, is on tertiary education which is education given after secondary education in universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses. Graduates of these institutions are among others expected to contribute maximally to national development through high level relevant manpower training as well as develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society (FRN, 2004). It is against the discovery of the importance associated with acquiring tertiary education that various governments and private individuals continued to establish tertiary institutions in Nigeria such that even before independence, the University College now the University of Ibadan was established as far back as 1948. At present, Nigeria has 84 government universities comprising 40 federal and 44 states as well as 68 privately owned universities making a total of 152 universities (Fapohunda, 2017). More so, there are 57 polytechnics excluding private ones and 66 colleges of education who enjoy TETFund interventions (Umeayo, 2018). These numbers keep growing in leaps and bounds, to satiate their quest, horde of applicants continue to seek opportunity into tertiary institutions year in year out to study many programs including Technical and Vocational Education. Although most of them are yet to be admitted, those already admitted have been observed to have overstretched the existing facilities, have limited access to the available facilities and equipment and have also widened the teacher students' ratio. As such, quality Technical and Vocational Education as was ab initio conceived have been compromised and could gradually fizzle out.

This debilitating syndrome has compelled the government as the regulator of tertiary education in the country to gestate plausible measures of mitigating these conundrums. To this end, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) became the child of necessity and was therefore established.

**The Establishment and mandate of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)**

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) was originally established as Education Trust Fund (ETF) by the then President Ibrahim Babangida's administration in 1993 through Act No. 7 and amended by Act No. 40 of 1998 now repealed and replaced with Tertiary Education Trust Fund Act 2011. It is an intervention agency set up to provide supplementary support to all levels of public tertiary institutions with the main objective of using funding alongside project management for the rehabilitation, restoration and consolidation of tertiary education in Nigeria. The mandate of the Fund as stipulated in the Acts are specifically for the provision or maintenance of:

1. Essential physical infrastructure for teaching and learning;
2. Instructional material and equipment
3. Research and publications
4. Academic staff training and development; and
5. Any other need which in the opinion of the Board of Trustees is critical and essential for the improvement and maintenance of standards in higher educational institutions.

The management of the Fund is under the oversight of an eleven (11) member Board of Trustees. These trustees are drawn from the six (6) geopolitical zones of the country as well as representatives of the Federal Ministry of Education, Federal Ministry of Finance and the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS).

**Rationale for the setting up of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)**

Available records reveal that from 1980 and the successive years that followed, unexplainable decay characterized all tiers of education in Nigeria to a detestable extent that tertiary institutions faculties were constantly unable to further their academic pursuits and develop their capacities as expected (TETFund, n.d.). This adversely impacted not only themselves by way of career stagnation, but also their products (the students) because no new ideas or knowledge seemed impacted. Additionally, collapsed facilities were monumental, teachers' and lecturers' morale were at its lowest level because of several factors including owing of salaries and earned allowances (all of which persist till date) (Edet, Onabe & Udida, 2017) as well as absence of enabling environment for conducive teaching, learning and research which if present hallmarks an ideal tertiary institution. In the words of David Effiom a professor of Guidance and Counselling with the Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Nigeria who took to his face book page to decry this problem, Nigeria's education has gradually metamorphosed into what looks like a failed state, with miserable punches below her weight in the hierarchy of world economics and politics, and her education system appear so inclement to talent hunt and its development. These retrogressive indicators in the nation's tertiary education sector particularly prompted the administration of President Ibrahim Babangida to incubate measures of mitigating the putrefaction and reinvigorate the nation's education sector in which Technical and Vocational Education is among.

Therefore, in pursuance of tertiary education revivification, the federal government in December 1990 constituted the commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria. That Commission birthed the Gray Longe Commission with the clear mandate of reviewing

the post independent Nigeria Higher Education after Lord Ashby's Commission in 1959. Amongst the recommendations of the Longe Commission was that funding of higher education should be through earmarked tax to be borne by companies operating in Nigeria. Having accepted the proposal, an implementation committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Professor Olu O. Akinkugbe, and an agreement was struck between the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1992 concerning the funding of universities.

Accordingly, the Education Tax Act No. 7 of 1993 was promulgated in January 1993 alongside other education related decrees. The Decree imposed a 2 percent tax on the assessable profit of all companies operating in Nigeria. This was eloquently a home grown solution to address issues of funding of education to resuscitate ailing infrastructure, restore the lost glory of Nigeria's education and the confidence repose on the system. Other benefits include restoring the eroded teachers' and lecturers' capacity, the development of prototype designs, and so on. The Education Tax Act No. 7 of 1993 thus mandated the Fund to operate as an intervention fund to all public education (federal, state, and local). This mandate was faithfully discharged between 1999 and May 2011 (TETFund, n.d.) when the education tax Act was repealed and replaced by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund. The identified lapses and challenges that brought about this were:

1. The ETF was overburdened and overstretched. As a result could only render palliative support to all levels of public educational institutions in Nigeria.
2. Duplication of functions and mandate of other agencies set up after the ETF such as Universal Basic Education (UBE) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
3. The decay, rot and dilapidation of facilities and related issues in tertiary institutions which continued to be irritating as funds were only thinly spread as it were.

### **Funding of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)**

The core source of income available to the Fund is the two percent education tax paid from the assessable profit of companies operating in Nigeria. The Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) assess and collect the tax on behalf of the Fund. The Board of Trustees administers, manages and disburses the tax imposed by the Act on the basis of:

1. Funding of all public tertiary educational institutions
2. Equality among the six geopolitical zones of the country in case of special intervention.
3. Equality among the states of the federation in case of regular intervention as follows;
  - a. The distribution shall be on the ratio 2:1:1 between universities, polytechnics and colleges of education
  - b. The Board of Trustee exercises power to give due consideration to the peculiarities of each geopolitical zone in the disbursement and management of the tax imposed by the Act between the various levels of tertiary education.

### **Conceptual view of renaissance and quality technical and vocational education**

Literally, the word “renaissance” connotes the revival of learning and culture (Oxford Advance Learners’ Dictionary). Contextually, it is synonymous with the rebirth of a thorough-breed technical and vocational education program, culture, and products which succeeds the era of paucity of fitting technical and vocational education graduates, faculty, impact and all- round stride capable of driving the economy and registering the nation in the world map.

Quality technical and vocational education on the other hand is viewed on the basis of how good and efficient the teachers are; how adequate and accessible the facilities and materials required for effective teaching and learning are; and how prepared the graduates are for meeting the challenges of life and for solving the societal needs (Oyebade, Oladipo & Adetoro, 2012). It is on this basis that Ayonmike, Okwele and Okeke (2015) affirmed that quality technical and vocational education is increasingly recognized as the bedrock of every development because it is an indispensable process for achieving national goals.

### **The state of technical and vocational education in Nigeria’s tertiary institutions**

That education and indeed technical and vocational education is the beacon of development remains doubtless even to the cynical. In agreement with this averment, Edet (2018) accentuated that there exists an unabated burning desire among a vast majority of Nigerians of all ages to acquire tertiary education and specifically technical and vocational education. The reason for this may not be distant from the postulation of Ume in Oladipo, Adeosun & Oni (2009) that tertiary institutions are worthy training centres capable of raising the intellectual tone of the society, while cultivating the public mind, purifying the national taste, providing the principles for popular aspirations and giving sobriety to ideas. As a result, opportuned Nigerian graduates who acquired tertiary education and specifically technical and vocational education in the 80s were able to carve a niche for themselves in the academic world to an enviable extent that some of them became renowned professors and occupied chairs in the best universities in the world (Daisi, 1997).

Such erudite Nigerian scholars according to David Effiom include Ishaya Shuaibu Audu, pioneer vice chancellor of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, who carted away all prizes at St. Mary’s University Medical School London; renowned Mathematician Chike Obi who solved Fermat’s 200 year old conjecture with pencil and paper while the Cambridge Mathematician John Wiles achieved same with the help of a computer working over a decade. These and many others happened in the glory days of Nigeria tertiary education.

On the minus side, it is brazenly seen nowadays that the number of Nigerian students in almost all disciplines including technical and vocational education that are schooling in tertiary institutions in Ghana, Sudan, Egypt and other West African countries and nations of the world is alarming. This to say the least is a substantial drain on the nation’s reserves as quantum of resources are constantly deployed into paying tuitions and other living expenses (Mato, 2016). What a misnomer that the trail blazer nation is now the tailgater? Shockingly, this author penned that the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2012 decried that the aggregated sum paid through the official channels to Ghanaian universities as tuition in the preceding year 2011 was in excess of the total budget for the entire federal universities in the country.

In Sudan, it is reported that floods of Nigerian students attend Sudanese universities and pay heavy tuition considered lower in relation to what is paid in other parts of the world due to the



perceived high quality of tertiary education in that nation. Evidently, most universities and other tertiary institutions in Sudan are today beaming with elegance courtesy of the huge cash inflow in terms of tuition from expatriate students most of whom are Nigerians (Mato, 2016). Whereas in Nigerian tertiary institutions, what greet us is dilapidated and moribund edifices despite the huge amounts of money the government purports to be injecting into the tertiary education sub-sector annually. Yet, technical and vocational education has continued to be run as one of the programs of study in Nigeria.

Ideally, these issues are what quality technical and vocational education should ordinarily address. But the impact of technical and vocational education is only felt theoretically if felt at all. No wonder Tony (2014) excoriated that the intriguing search for innovation that once served as the refining influence of a typical Nigerian academe had long been eroded, paving way for faculty exodus into other rewarding sectors where commensurate pay and recognition of hard work are accorded it pride of place. The few academic staff that remains struggle to roll out research publications that are never implemented, and no domesticated curriculum is crafted to tackle the myriad problems the nation is facing. Although authors like Onyeike and Eseyin (2014) reported that TETFund's presence has been felt in virtually all universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in the country, the questions that follow is: if this is true, why is it that no Nigerian university is listed among the best 1000 universities in the world nor in the first 10 universities in Africa? Why is it that ASUU, ASUP and other affiliate unions in tertiary institutions are intermittently embarking on industrial actions?

In a nutshell, the submission of Enogholase (2013) is that Nigerian tertiary institutions today are in shambles and are at best avenues for the production of graduates that are merely a reflection of the general rot in the system. This is so because politicians may have milked funds and the abundant resources that would have been directed towards entrenching quality technical and vocational education, and deploy same into political jamboree. On his part, Mamah (2017) referenced the detestable description made by Okebukola- the erstwhile Executive Secretary National Universities Commission which reflects the despicable condition of things in the nation's institutions. This description assembles university professors into 3 spectrums as: (1) the five-star professors, that is, those who are renowned in the academic field all over the world occasioned by their published works in the best peer reviewed journals. (2) The above average professors, that is, those who are not known in their fields even within their own environment not to talk of the neighboring countries like Ghana, (3) Third grade professors, those promoted by their vice chancellors probably because they belong to the blocks that installed them in their various positions and therefore needed to be compensated. According to Okebukola, these category of professors constitute the group of so called "scholars" the vice chancellors push and push until they become professors. He maintained that many of such abound in the system (and this include Technical and Vocational Education Departments).

### **Interventions by Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund): An excerpt**

Considering the mind-weakening revelations of the state of tertiary institutions in the country, the interventions offered by TETFund proves to be insufficient to sustain the Nigerian tertiary institutions and in particular technical and vocational education programs. However, the amount expended by TETFund on her five minded areas and other related areas in the universities, polytechnic and colleges of education are chronicled below. These amount covers all programs of study including technical and vocational education departments):

**TABLE 1: Annual Direct Disbursement by TETFund to each category of tertiary institutions**

Sub sector	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Universities	₦395.00M	₦598.00M	₦646.00M	₦912.00M	₦337.00M	₦1,009.41B	₦650.15M
Polytechnics	₦244.90M	₦339.50M	₦443.00M	₦661.00M	₦250.00M	₦691.032M	₦450.80M
Colleges of education	₦190.00M	₦321.00M	₦390.00M	₦581.00M	₦227.00M	₦679.067M	₦440.70M

Source: Umeayo, 2018

**TABLE 2: 2009 – 2013 sectorial intervention allocation to universities by TETFund**

Years		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of benefitting institutions		57	56	58	63	70
S/n	Sectors	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)
1.	Projects	57.00	193.14	175.00	347.00	350.00
2.	Research	7.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	20.00
3.	Library Development	10.00	20.00	25.00	53.00	60.00
4.	Staff Training and	50.00	60.00	80.00	130.00	140.00
5.	Development	3.00	5.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
6.	Publication of Journals	-	-	5.00	5.00	5.00
7.	Manuscript Development	-	15.00	20.00	40.00	40.00
8.	Conference Attendance	-	-	75.00	-	20.00
	Entrepreneurship centres					
	Total	127.00	303.14	400.00	595.00	645.00

Source: TETFund, n.d

**TABLE 3: 2009 – 2013 sectorial intervention allocation to Polytechnics by TETFund**

Years		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of benefitting institutions		52	47	50	51	52
S/n	Sectors	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)
1.	Projects	38.34	126.06	169.90	208.00	238.00
2.	Research	3.00	5.00	10.00	9.00	10.00
3.	Library Development	5.00	10.00	10.00	30.00	50.00
4.	Staff Training and	25.00	30.00	40.00	64.00	80.00
5.	Development	1.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	10.00
6.	Publication of Journals	-	-	1.00	1.00	10.00
7.	Manuscript	-	7.50	10.00	20.00	30.00
8.	Development	-	-	10.00	-	10.00
	Conference Attendance					
	Entrepreneurship centres					
	Total	72.34	180.56	255.90	337.00	438.00

Source: TETFund, n.d

**TABLE 3: 2009 – 2013 sectorial intervention allocation to Colleges of Education by TETFund**

Years		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of benefitting institutions		61	62	54	54	54
S/n	Sectors	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)	Amount (₦ M)
1.	Projects	37.16	112.67	125.00	208.00	210.00
2.	Research	2.50	5.00	10.00	5.00	10.00
3.	Library Development	5.00	10.00	10.00	20.00	30.00
4.	Staff Training and Development	15.00	20.00	30.00	55.00	80.00
5.	Publication of Journals	1.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	10.00
6.	Manuscript Development	-	-	1.00	1.00	5.00
7.	Conference Attendance	-	7.50	10.00	15.00	30.00
8.	Entrepreneurship centres	-	-	10.00	10.00	10.00
Total		60.66	157.17	201.00	319.00	390.00

Source: TETFund, n.d

### Challenges confronting TETFund

The followings are some of the challenges militating against the success of TETFund:

1. **Insufficient fund:** The 2 percent education tax imposed on the assessable profit of companies operating in Nigeria which is the main source of funding TETFund proves inadequate to satisfy the growing needs of public tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Unarguably, the incessant industrial action by the Academic staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), and other affiliate unions in the tertiary institutions including the colleges of educations tells articulately that insufficient funding is a key issue of TETFund.
2. **Unfavorable government policy:** Being a government agency, TETFund is answerable to the government and is under obligation to comply with the decisions and policies of the government. To this end, the Fund is demanded to concentrate its intervention activities on the public tertiary institutions only at the exclusion of private institutions whose efforts if assisted by the Fund could enhance the status of Technical and Vocational Education in the country. Also, it is within the discretion of the government to influence what percentage of funding or project goes to which institution, state, or geopolitical zone. This clearly is an acute challenge to TVET renaissance by the agency.
3. **Delay in conducting audit:** In Nigeria, it has been seen as a norm that audit of financial records, site and operational activities especially in the public services sectors are never conducted in a timely manner. As such, it is difficult to identify areas where problems are imminent. This has made way for avoidable losses to be suffered by the Fund which could have help bring about the renaissance of quality TVET.
4. **Lack of supervision:** There exist irregular monitoring and evaluation of projects and programs sponsored by the Fund. Cases abound where institutions get funds for special projects, but many years after, such is not executed. And for some executed, sub-



standard materials are utilized, yet, these culprits go scot-free. In some other instances, recipients receive grants to pursue further studies but never embark on such and nobody questions. Some secure the grant to pursue a particular program in a designated country and/or institution, but divert to another. This poses serious challenge to the renaissance of quality Technical and Vocational Education by TETFund.

5. **Absence of project defense:** Allocation of intervention grants to institutions by the Fund lacks defense by the benefitting institutions to justify the need for such expenditure to be incurred. This has often time led to spending on projects that lacked direct impact on the felt-needs of institutions and students especially of TVET.
6. **Uncooperative attitude by registered companies:** Observations and reports has revealed that most registered companies carrying out businesses in Nigeria have constantly default in the deduction and remittance of the statutory 2 percent education tax to the relevant tax authority. This deliberate attitude of tax evasion is counterproductive and inhibits the successful operations of the Fund.
7. Leakages of money accruable to the Fund due to under assessment, under collection and outright pilferage by the collecting agency and some of their insincere staff (Uzonwanne in Adaubiele, 2016).
8. Award of contracts to incompetent contractors, thus, littering institutions with abandon projects.

#### **Suggested solutions to the challenges confronting TETFund**

1. The two percent Education Tax imposed on the assessable profit of companies operating in Nigeria should be faithfully collected and dutifully remitted to the coffers of the government for redistribution to the ever-growing tertiary institutions in the country. This implies that the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) should enforce compliance in the collection of this tax. Where this is not adhered to by the companies, stiffer measures should be employed in ensuring that defaulters are dealt with according to the law.
2. Periodic audit exercise should be conducted to ensure that projects for which money has been expended on are executed. Similarly, beneficiaries of grants from the Fund for various programs of study should pursue their programs as approved especially as it will enhance the teaching, learning and development of quality technical and vocational education in the country.
3. It should be made compulsory for potential beneficiary institutions to present and defend their proposed projects prior to the release of grants for the execution of such projects.
4. Regular monitoring, evaluation and periodic review of the quality of projects undertaken by the benefitting institutions should be intensified to ascertain the extent of compliance.
5. It is needful that the Fund compiles a compendium of all TETFund sponsored projects undertaken to promote the teaching, learning and advancement of quality technical and

vocational education in the country's tertiary institutions in a well-packaged print for circulation to all stakeholders so as to appreciate the activities of the Fund.

6. TETFund should oversight institutions and request of them to engage contractors who possess proven and credible track records for projects execution. As a matter of importance, law enforcement agencies should be involved to recover sums paid to contractors for which services are yet to be provided. Such erring contractors should be blacklisted.

## CONCLUSION

Nigeria may never be able to attain her vision 20:2020 aspiration or attain any meaningful development as long as it lacks the capacity of producing highly skilled manpower for its governance and industries. Correctly said, our varsities, are responsible for the provision of highly skilled technical and vocational education graduates; our polytechnics are expected to provide middle and high level technical manpower needed by our factories; while our colleges of education are required to provide quality teachers.

Therefore, to claim and profess technical and vocational education to be the bedrock of a knowledge economy without advancing its renaissance exposes a contradiction. True renaissance of quality technical and vocational education include in its package sustainable funding, effective curriculum content and delivery, robust school climate, balance teacher students ratio, instructional aids and adequate facilities. These if religiously pursued by TETFund will bring about the renaissance of quality technical and vocational education in Nigeria.

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