

AN APPRAISAL OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes in Nigeria is yet to be understood by the members of the society and that accounts for their negative attitude of relegating it to the background despite its potentials and undeniable evidence of its' products and services. The programmes are in different categories and levels but are characterized by the practical components which cut across all the different levels. The historical research method was adopted for the study using primary and secondary data. The study reveals that technical vocational education and training programmes have been in vogue from the pre-colonial era to date. It was the main training programmes available before the advent of colonialism and introduction of western education in Nigeria. TVET programmes in Nigeria is not meeting the needs of the society and the paper advanced what should be done to bridge the need gap as the way forward.*

KEYWORDS: TVET, skills, industries, trainers, trainees

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian education system is in an epileptic state and need an urgent attention to save it from total collapse (Muyiwa 2015). It is no longer strange to see graduates jobless and unable to establish in their areas of specialization (Akanbi 2017). Nigeria is a rich country that is blessed with a lot of natural resources that can be harnessed to create jobs for the teeming graduates that are being turned out yearly from the various institutions in the country. The truth is that there are lots of jobs in Nigeria seeking for people while there are lots of people in the same country seeking for jobs. It then implies that there are lots of job vacancies seeking for qualified people with needed skills to fill (Okoye and Okwelle 2017). The problems of unemployment in Nigeria is due to lack of skills to harness what nature has provided already. It is therefore necessary to take steps in the right direction of finding solution to the identified problems facing the country, to fill the existing gap between acquired skills of TVET graduates and the skills which are needed in the world of work. One of the ways the country can get some of these problems solved is to consider its Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes with a view to making it functional; hence the paper is focused on TVET. One of the specific objectives is to operationalize TVET to the understanding of everyone which could lead to change of attitude towards TVET programmes and embracing it as an important programme that has the potentials of moving the country forward and bridging the existing gap. There is a gap between what the society say about TVET and what they do with TVET. The Nigerian society pay lips service to TVET and funds meant for its implementation is either diverted or mismanaged (Akanbi 2017; Zite and Deebom

2017). The programmes (TVET) offer variety skills that are applicable to the world of work at various levels and stages (Dokubo 2017). This paper stands out to correct the negative perception of TVET by the society through proper enlightenment. The implication of the research is that members of the society would now have proper understanding of TVET programmes and change their negative perception. As their negative perception is changed, they will invest in the programmes of TVET and encourage others to do same. In addition, it will awaken policy makers and implementers to be more focused on TVET programmes. This would lead to a reduction in the rate of mismanagement and diversion of funds for the programmes because of the enlightenment. Historical method of investigation was used in the conduct of this research and was considered under the following subheadings: understanding of TVET programmes, uniqueness of TVET, historical overview of TVET in Nigeria, and the way forward.

Understanding of TVET Programmes

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes houses three different levels of programmes which are technical in nature. The technicality in the three different levels is what brought it together under the umbrella of the acronym TVET. The least in the ladder of TVET are those that are technically trained to acquire practical skills in each trade under a master craftsman and they are called artisans (Eze 2010; Oguzor and Opara 2011). No paper qualification is needed as entry requirement. Next in the ladder are those that attend vocational schools or vocational training centers and they are called craftsmen. Paper qualifications are needed as entry requirements into vocational schools and Craft Certificate is issued at the end after a prescribed examination. Following the craftsmen are the technicians, technologist and the engineers. The people at this level also require paper qualifications at the entry point and paper certification at the point of exit. The paper qualifications needed as part of the entry requirements depend on the programme of study. The Certificates that are being offered also depend on the programme and the type of examination enrolled for and passed at the end of the training.

The technicians are those that attended technical colleges, while those that attended mono-technics and polytechnics are called technologist; and those that attended university are called engineers. In TVET ladder, the engineers are at the last (highest) run of the ladder in terms of paper qualification and hierarchy in the field of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It is therefore clear that TVET programmes differs and are offered at different levels at different stages to different categories of people based on their qualifications, abilities and interest.

The Uniqueness of TVET

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a kind of education that prepares recipients of it with needed skills for work in each vocation; it equips them with the theoretical and practical knowledge that are needed to function effectively and efficiently in a chosen field of interest (Okoye and Arimonu 2016). It is a kind of education that has a wide variety of courses and programmes for different kinds of people, irrespective of their physical or mental state, to prepare them for a functional life. It is a liberal kind of education that has a place for those who are highly gifted and talented, the average and below average in terms of academic achievement: logical – mathematical and linguistic intelligences (Wodi and Dokubo 2012). Some people are highly gifted in mental/cognitive reasoning, while others are highly talented in manipulative skills and innovations. “Most people attribute intelligence to academic achievement which only measure two

aspects of intelligence: logical – mathematical and linguistic intelligences. They failed to include the other aspects of intelligence: musical, spatial, bodily – kinesthetic, naturalist, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences” (Gardner 1993 in Wodi and Dokubo 2012 p.56). Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes take into consideration the level of intelligence and gifts of individuals and explores the various aspects of intelligence to the benefit of its recipients. This is what makes it unique and differ from general education that can only benefit those who possess academic intelligence and may be lacking in other aspects of intelligences. Lack of proper understanding of the uniqueness of TVET programmes may be responsible for the attitude of some people towards the programmes (Hartl, M., 2009; Ogundele, Waziri and Idris 2014). Mental/cognitive reasoning and academic achievement are not the only ways or criteria for measuring intelligence (Awang, Sail, Alavi, and Ismail 2011 in Dike 2013). Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes in Nigeria is in categories: artisans, technicians, sub-professionals and the professionals (Akpan, Usoro and Ibritam 2003). The grouping emanated from the differences in the trainees’ level of theoretical knowledge at the point of entry and exit, skill acquisition, training requirement at the point of entry and certification at the end of training. The level of theoretical knowledge of an artisan is not the same with that of a technician in the same trade or vocation. Artisans are those that are trained by master-craftsmen through the open apprenticeship system. Their training does not require any paper qualification or written exam. Artisans are mainly trained on practical aspect of the trade with little or no theoretical concepts. Artisans are at the very low level of vocational education programme. Their training does not require much academic activity as the main purpose of the programme is to satisfy societal needs technically at a low level of maintenance and repairs of some basic equipment and machines (Ogundele, Waziri and Idris 2014). The main objectives of their programme are to produce trained low-level man power to meet the needs of the society at that same level. Their training focuses mainly on practical with little or no emphasis on the theoretical aspects. There are no strict qualifications needed for one to be enrolled as an artisan and there are no age limits. The duration, mode of entry and exit is flexible and varies from trade to trade and the individual master trainer or vocational training center. There is no uniform curriculum for the training of artisans but the acquired skills in the same trade from different vocational training centers or master trainers (master craftsmen) are the same due to the technical nature of the programmes. The provision of this low level of TVET programmes which could be formal or informal may be responsible for its relegation to the background by some members of the society that are not well informed about the nature and levels of the programmes.

The next level of TVET programmes are the technicians and they are higher than the artisans in terms of the theoretical aspect of the trade. Their training is more demanding when compared with that of the artisans. They are trained to understand some theoretical concepts behind some of the practical activities which the artisans may not be exposed to. The duration, mode of entry and exit are specified and there is a uniform curriculum. It is being offered mainly in Technical Colleges and accredited Vocational Training Centers in Nigeria. Before their graduation, they are made to sit for three examinations: Federal Craft Examination, Trade Test Grade 2 and 3, and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) which has now been replaced with West African Examination Council (WAEC) Technical examination with centers all over the country. There are provisions made for artisans to grow and progress to technician level by enrolling and preparing for the necessary required examinations. The next level is the sub-professionals and they are products of

colleges of education which are offering vocational technical courses, mono-technics and polytechnics. Those that graduate from mono and polytechnics with Higher National Diploma Certificate (HND) are called technologist in Nigeria. Mode of entry and exit are specified and strictly adhered to. Level of training is higher than that of the technicians in terms of theory and practice. Those from colleges of education possess Nigerian Certificate in Education (Technical), (NCE); while those from mono-technics and polytechnics possess National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) Certificates respectively. The highest level of TVET programmes in Nigeria are the professionals and they are products from universities. They are designers and hold a university degree from various professions (BSc; MSc; and PhD).

Technical Vocational Education and Training programmes are designed to give opportunities for trainees to be gainfully employed or establish on their own as practicing Automobile Mechanics, Electricians, Builders/Brick-layers, Carpenters/Furniture makers and all other trades at the technicians and sub-professionals to professional levels. The programmes are multifarious/diverse and have a place for individuals who are willing and able to pass through the training rigors that are involved at any of the levels: artisan, technician, sub-professional and professional to profit withal.

Historical overview of TVET in Nigeria

Historically, TVET programmes are part of the cultural heritage of Nigerians. Some families and communities are known and described by their vocational trade(s). Families who are known for specific vocations in which they specialize in, preserve it and pass it on from generation to generation through training. Those that are interested in trades that are outside their family trade do send their children out to become apprentices to someone else that specializes in such vocation/trade and this practice cut across the various ethnic groups in the state and other states of the federation.

The traditional TVET programmes before the coming of the colonial masters and introduction of western education were well organized in its own way, in that it has goals, purposes and methods of teaching (Wodi and Dokubor 2012). Though its curriculum were not written, it was clear and unambiguous with clear goals and objectives. The goals were to: conserve the cultural norms and values, train and equip children with vocational skills needed to be self-reliant in the world of work. While the purpose was for, full training of the child's intellect, physical and moral; introducing him/her to the community and to infuse in him/her societal norms and obedience to constituted authorities and to those older than him/her in age; acquire skills in specific trade/vocation, training on how to live with others in harmony, development, understanding, appreciation, promotion and preservation of cultural norms and values of the society (Ehinder 1986 in Oyeleke and Akinyeye 2013).

Nigerians have their way of impacting knowledge, skills and aptitude into the young ones and trainees under their control. Some of the methods they adopted among others were: direct instructions, demonstrations, and questioning. And the learners must pay attention, watch carefully what the master craftsman is doing, answer and ask questions if any. The informal method of instruction was used during the pre-colonial era as the people were not literate. There was no age limit as per learning of any trade but the main determinant factor was interest and willingness to

apprentice with the master craftsman of the trade/vocation of interest (Oyeleke and Akinyeye 2013).

There were so many trades/vocations that were available for people to choose from. So, any member of a family that wishes to learn a trade outside their family trade has the option of going to become an apprentice to a master craftsman from another family that is skilful in such trade. Certain trades cut across families, ethnic groups and states. The available trades/vocation range from service trades to production/manufacturing trades (Oyeleke and Akinyeye 2013; Nwokeocha 2015).

The apprenticeship system that was in vogue at that time of pre-colonial period was well organised with laid down rules and regulations which were not written but were strictly observed. There were specific periods to apprentice with a master craftsman for non-members of the family and is determined by the nature of the trade/vocation and the master craftsman. There is usually an agreement between the master craftsman and the person/parents or guardian of the apprentice before training commences. This agreement is unwritten but usually adhered to strictly. In most cases, the apprentice usually lives with the master craftsman for the period of his/her apprenticeship. He/she will do a lot of house work at the close of the day's activities. While the master usually takes responsibility of the feeding, clothing, protecting and sheltering of the apprentice. At the expiration of the agreed period of apprenticeship, the apprentice is usually set free ceremoniously with working tools and materials with which to start his or her own workshop and become a master trainer to other apprentice that may come to him or her to learn his or her trade (Oyeleke and Akinyeye 2013).

The major occupations of Nigerians at that time of pre-colonial era were: crops and animal production, fishing, wine taping, hunting and tales telling among others. These occupations are still being practiced today in most parts of the country. The rich cultural heritage and dynamic traditional TVET programmes instituted by the hard-working Nigerians, before the coming of the colonial masters is now being viewed as obsolete and old school at the dawn of colonial masters and the introduction of western education (Wodi and Dokubo 2012). Western education which was introduced by the colonial masters to enable them carry out their mission of evangelism and trading has not only dominated the traditional TVET programmes in Nigeria but has sent it into oblivion.

Oyeleke and Akinyeye (2013) state that education in Africa which apply to Nigeria at the time of pre-colonial era was much more than been certificated without employment. Their educational enterprise then was effective and goal oriented and met the immediate needs of the individuals and the society at large. It should therefore be understood that Africans were educated but not in western sense. According to them, the curriculum was not documented but it had clear aims, goals and objectives. Every member of the society went through the training and learning experiences were centred on the following aspects of life: Physical training which involve acrobatic display, drumming, dancing and wrestling, thereby taking care of their psychomotor domain; Intellectual training which included counting, story-telling, proverbs, poetry, legends, local and ancestral history, story-relays, riddles, moonlight story-telling, and others.

Functionality was what guided the African education system. The curriculum was justifiably tailored towards achieving and mastering specific tasks. These include: Agricultural training such as farming, hunting, fish farming, animal husbandry and others; Vocational trades like making of fabric, Trades and crafts such as weaving, carving, carpentry, building, barbering, hair plaiting, palm wine tapping and selling, dancing and acrobatics; Character training such as respect for elders, table manners, toilet manners, greetings, community participation and promotion of cultural heritage.

The present state of the country in terms of unemployment could be because of abandonment of their rich vocational culture. Nigeria is part of the African continent and whatever applies to the continent is applicable to it to a large extent.

Fafunwa 1974 in Oyeleke and Akinyeye (2013) noted that “the school was incidental and if Christianity could have been implanted in Nigeria without the use of school, most missionary’s groups would have tried to do so”. However, the introduction of Western Education in Nigeria should be credited to the Missionaries. They had their primary aims and purposes of coming to Africa which would have been difficult to achieve without western education. Therefore, the curriculum of the kind of education that was introduced at the time of colonial era was channelled towards the achievement of their goals and not that of the Africans. Their narrow conception determined the structure of the school and its curriculum which were predominantly Bible reading, religion, religious stories, and songs, prayers, sewing for girls and farming for boys. Their religion formed the school curriculum at that period.

The Roman Catholic Mission in 1876 established a vocational school called Topo Industrial School for Delinquent near Badagry. There was substantial improvement on the school subjects over the years during the missionary period despite the facts that the subjects were heavily tailored towards British system to the extent that Fafunwa 1974 in Oyeleke and Akinyeye (2013) described the products of the schools as Africans in colour but British in outlook and intellects.

The colonial period of TVET programmes in Nigeria from available literature shows that it has witnessed tremendous changes. It was during the colonial era that TVET programmes began to wear a new look. It was transformed from been an informal educational programme to formal education programme. Literature also has it that the first formal vocational technical institution was established in Nigeria in 1895 and was cited in Calabar (Ogundeke, Waziri and Idris 2014). The formal vocational technical institutions that were established during the colonial era were mandated to teach and impart theoretical knowledge and practical skills into the learners in preparation for useful living in the world of work. Ogundeke, Waziri and Idris (2014), noted that in 1925, there was an educational policy that favoured vocational technical education programme in Nigeria. The policy led to the establishment of more vocational technical institutions for the training of trainees. The colonial masters saw the need of TVET programmes in Nigeria as time went on and responded to the challenges by mandating some of the corporations (Post Telegraph Development, the Nigerian Railway Corporation and Industrial companies) in the country to train technical assistants in various trades.

The colonial masters established Yaba Higher College in 1934 and in 1952, they established three technical institutes, seven trade centres and eighteen handicraft centres in Nigeria (Akpan, Usoro and Ibritam 2003; Ogundele, Waziri and Idris 2014). However, the colonial masters did not emphasize TVET programmes in Nigeria. Their emphasis and focus were on liberal education (Wodi and Dokubo 2012; Mamman 2013).

Before Nigeria gained her independent in 1960, the colonial masters prepared a take-off ground for the continuity of vocational technical education programmes. Ogundele, Waziri and Idris 2014 state that nine-man committee were set up in 1959 to review Nigeria education system. The committee was named after the chairman – Ashby, hence it was called Ashby commission. The membership of the commission comprises of: three Nigerians, three Americans and three Britons. It was the recommendations of the commission that gave rise to the formulation of National Policy on Education in 1977 which was reversed in 1981, 1987, 1998, 2004, 2009 and 2013 respectively (Okoye and Okwelle 2017). A National policy on Education seminal which was held in 1973, modified the 1959 conference papers and adopted the National Policy on Education (Oyeleke and Akinyeye 2013). This led to the change in Nigerian education system from 6-5-2-3 system to 6-3-3-4 system of education (Wodi and Dokubo 2012).

The new indigenous post-colonial education system of 6-3-3-4 emphasises vocational technical education from the first six years of primary education through the first three and second three years of secondary education to the four years of university education where the trainees become professionals in various fields. Despite the new education system that favoured TVET programmes, it is still not meeting the needs of the society and that of the learners. Literature has it that vocational technical education programme in Nigeria is a failure (Oluntope 2014; Dike 2013; Eze, Ezenwafor and Obi 2015).

Post-colonial era of TVET programmes in Nigeria seems not to have provided solution to the problems affecting its success despite curriculum restructuring (Umunadi 2013; Wodi and Dokubo 2012). Ogundele, Waziri and Idris 2014 state that the negative attitude of Nigerians towards vocational technical education programmes have not changed. This according to them may be responsible for the present state of the programme in Nigeria. Technical Vocational Education and Training programmes in Nigeria is yet to attain its desired position of meeting the needs of the trainees, industries and society in general. There are no remarkable changes even at this present post-colonial era. Available literature has shown that the actual learning experiences of vocational technical education graduates are not the same with that which is needed in the industry in which they are meant to serve as employees (Okoye 2014). This shows that there is a gap which need to be filled.

The Way Forward

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is not new in Nigeria (Akpan, Usoro and Ibritan 2003; Umunadi 2013) but require new approach for it to meet the needs of the learner, the immediate society and compete favorably within the globe (Oyeleke and Akinyeye 2013; Seyi 2014). First, need assessment should be conducted bearing in mind the needs of learners, society and the globe (Ijaduola, Odunaike and Ajayi 2012; Muiyiwa 2015). New emerging technological findings should be taking into consideration while conducting the need assessment. This should

be followed up with curriculum review in line with the needs of learners, employers of labor and the society in general (Wodi and Dokubo 2012; Odigwe and Eleue 2014; Okoye and Arimonu 2016).

There should be separate body who should be trusted with the sole responsibilities of the management of TVET programmes in the country. This body should be made up of selected: qualified experienced professionals in the field of TVET, Curriculum experts, Industries/Employers of labor, members of the society, TVET trainers and trainees to be actively involved in the planning and reviewing of the TVET curriculum (Moja 2000; Odigwe and Eluwa 2014). Industries in the country should be actively involved in training of TVET trainees at all levels. The course contents should cover various aspects of trades/fields of specializations. Effective monitoring mechanism should be put in place to see that standards are being maintained in the training of trainees. Written examination as the only means of certification should be de-emphasized. Training environment should be a replica of work environment for all available trades/fields of specializations (Goel 2009). This call for equipping of all institutions and training centers of TVET programmes in the country. Qualified professionals and master craftsmen should be used as trainers for all TVET programmes. Funding of TVET programmes should be jointly carried out by government, industries and NGOs (Saidu Abba and Malgwa 2015). There should be regular supervision, monitoring, evaluation and review of TVET programmes.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes in Nigeria are not new but require new approach for it to meet the needs of the society in which it operates. It is an old training programme which was used to preserve cultural heritage of various tribes in Nigeria before the advent of the colonial masters and the introduction of western education. With modern civilization and advanced technology, TVET in Nigeria is lagging and need overhauling to bring it to the required standard and bridge the exiting need gap.

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