



Technical and Vocational Education and Training: A Panacea for Unemployment and Poverty Reduction Among Nigerian Youths

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Abstract

A major problem facing the Nigerian youths today is unemployment and poverty. This study reviews existing literature on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), as a means of proffering solution to the unemployment and poverty problems in Nigeria by generating employment opportunities and imparting the right skills. Findings show that TVET has direct linkages with unemployment and poverty reduction, which are general education and occupational training. The chances of people getting employment and living a better life can be achieved via general education and TVET skill training for work. However, these chances are higher with TVET skill training because it provides vocational skills, facilitates the transition from school to work, and leads to a higher labour market value when compared to general or academic training. The focus of most international organizations is to develop people's skills for employment generation and poverty reduction. Poverty and unemployment have been greatly reduced in several developing countries as a result of skills development. To boost the performance and competence of Nigerian youths in the world market, the study recommends youths' preferences for vocational activities, adequate funding of TVET programmes, modern training equipment to TVET Institutions, commitment of relevant stakeholders to youth empowerment and motivation to boost their interest in technical and vocational activities.

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Introduction

International organizations like World Bank and United Nations have expressed great concern about the challenges of reducing unemployment as well as skills development for employment generation among developing countries (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2007; World Bank, 2008). Studies have shown a link between skills development and unemployment reduction among developing countries. Findings from 51 developing countries across the globe indicate that the skills development of 1% is associated with the decline of 1.5% unemployment rates (Asian Development Bank, 2009). The primary objective of

Technical and Vocational Education and Training is the acquisition of employable skills for the world of work. Without job-related skills, young people and adults cannot benefit from employment opportunities that offer a decent income. Countries like Benin and Burkina Faso now have a modernized or renovated "dual" system of traditional apprenticeship where learners alternate between the classroom (for theoretical learning) and the workshops of the master artisans (for practical skills training). Some other countries like Ghana and Senegal have developed programs to upgrade the pedagogical skills of the

master trainers in an effort to improve the overall skills transmission and effectiveness.

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) skills training have been linked to employment generation in many West African countries to facilitate the creation of employment opportunities for the young and fast growing population (Svenia, 2019). A report conducted by Svenia Busson and her team in 2019 revealed the success of TVET in four countries namely: Senegal, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Nigeria.

In Senegal, the School-Company Training Programme (PF2E) was established under the Ministry of Vocational Training, and participants were trained in cooking and service. By April 2019, 523 students had been placed in 23 companies across the country in collaboration with 22 training institutions. In total, the project enabled 579 young people to find an apprenticeship in 2019. In addition, EDACY, a TVET organization developed a training programme, in response to the need of youths in Senegal to provide ICT-skills. Participants were paid a monthly salary ranging between 170\$ and 280\$ during their internship. Since the inception of the programme in 2016 and as of September 2019, EDACY has trained 90 students with a placement rate of 98%.

The Center for Port and Logistics Training (CFMPL) is a public-private partnership that trains at three levels (Level 5: Drivers, Level 4: Specialized Technicians, and Level 3: Specialized Senior Technicians) in the fields of transport, logistics, handling and port operations. More specifically, students are trained to become truck drivers, who specialized in port operations or to take charge of technical handling. Between 2011 and 2017, the center has trained over 254 students and 81% got placed in companies.

In Ivory Coast, the Training Center for Electricity Trades (CME), trained 443 students during the 2018-2019 school year, and 71% were hired six months after graduation. In Ghana, Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET), in conjunction with the trade associations and GIZ

(German cooperation) have trained over 2,974 master craftspeople and 1,003 apprentices in five main trade associations namely: fashion, cosmetics, automotive, electronics and electricity since 2018. In addition, the Africa Internship Academy (AIA) has already trained and supported 230 young people in their quest for employability, at the end of which 70% of them earn a short or long term contract.

In Rwanda, 538 participating enterprises engaged in training over 6,500 youths in seven TVET professions, namely: automotive repairs, carpentry, electronics, handicrafts, tailoring, welding, leatherworks and footwear, between 2004 and 2010. About 81% of the graduates secured a job, 36% started their own business and 46% obtained paid employment. (IFAD, 2011).

Since the TVET skills training programme in these countries can generate employment for more than 80% of the graduates, then the Nigeria TVET programme should generate the same since both African countries share the same historical background. Several factors contribute to youth unemployment in Nigeria. According to Fajana (2000), these are long period of initial unemployment, poor manpower planning, poor educational facilities, economic recession, continued proportionality of expatriates in employment, collective bargaining process, graduate attitude to some type of jobs, attitude to jobs in other locations, search behavior of employers and job seekers, use of capital-intensive technology, wide rural-urban migration, formal-informal sectors differentials, to mention a few.

There is a relationship between skills developments in TVET and employment. According to the Nigerian National Policy on Education, it is expected that trainees completing technical college programmes in Nigeria improve the economy through the following three national policy options (FGN, 2014):

- a) Secured employment in privates or governments organization

- b) Set up their own business, become self-reliant and employ others
- c) Pursue further education in advanced craft or technical programs in polytechnics, colleges of education (technical) and universities of technology.

Despite the fact that TVET skills developments are being taught at universities and other educational

levels in Nigeria since the early 1980s, the percentage of unemployment in Nigeria still increased annually as shown in Figure 1. The statistics show a steady increment from 3.7% in the year 2013 to 9.01% in 2020. This gives the impression that the percentages of unemployment among TVET graduates increase at all academic levels.

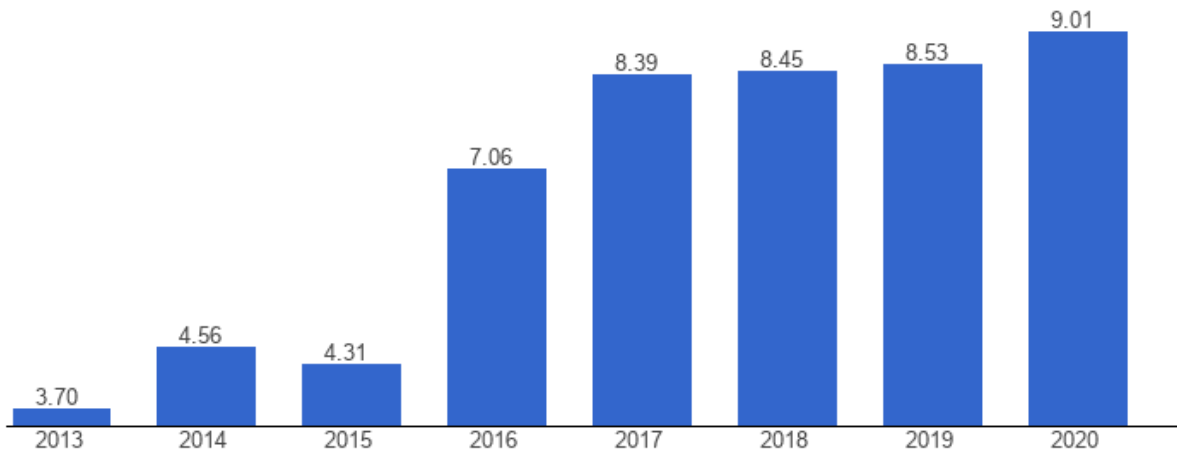


Figure 1: Unemployment rate in Nigeria (2013-2020). Source: The World Bank

From Figure 1, there is a growing and alarming rate of unemployment in the country. This implies that there are problems with the labour force training institutions including TVET programmes in the country.

Furthermore, Federal Government statistics had classified the rate of unemployment in Nigeria based on Educational Level and Gender as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Unemployment Rate by Educational Level and Gender in Nigeria

Educational Level	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Below Primary	21.5	23.7	22.7
Primary	15.6	21.9	18.7
JSS	19.5	24.2	21.7
Vocational/Commercial	15.2	22.4	18.7
SSS	21.2	23.4	22.1
NCE/OND/NURSING	21.9	22.7	22.2
BA/BSC/B.ED/HND	22.6	28.8	24.6

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2012

From table 1, it can be deduced that in 2012, the rate of unemployment of university bachelor's degree and equivalent polytechnics HND graduates was (24.6%) higher than those who had below primary education (22.7%) and NCE, OND and Nursing (22.2%) in Nigeria. Unemployment rate among TVET graduates in Nigeria is very high. This is evidently seen from the table above in which bachelor's degree and Higher National Diploma graduates have the highest rate of unemployment among all educational levels. It is also observed that across all educational levels, unemployment rate is higher in females than their male counterparts.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria

Technical and vocational education is used as a comprehensive term in the educational process involving general education as well as the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (FGN, 2004).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is also an integral part of general education to prepare individuals for work (UNESCO-ILO, 2002; Okoro, 2006) and enhance their chances for employment (Van, 2002). TVET emphasizes the application of knowledge, attitudes and manipulative skills for specific occupational fields or clusters of related occupational fields (King & Palmer, 2006). For instance, through TVET, trainees who graduated from technical college programmes in Nigeria can secure employment in privates and government enterprises or set up their own business for self-reliance and employ others (FGN, 2014).

In Nigeria, people acquire technical and vocational skills via training offered in universities, polytechnics, colleges of education (technical), technical colleges, senior secondary schools as well as skills acquisition centres in various states across the country (FGN, 2014; National Education Research and Development

Council, NERDC, 2008). These skills range from electrical and electronics technology, metal work technology, mechanical/automobile technology, building technology, woodwork technology, etc. TVET is a practical oriented education, and this makes it unique in its content and approach.

How TVET Reduces Unemployment and Poverty

There are two prominent ways by which TVET reduces unemployment and poverty reduction. These are via general education and skills training. Technical and Vocational Education and Training that is tailored to the needs of the labor market can affect economic productivity. Vocational education and training paths combine general skills with occupational skills to promote a smooth transition to the labor market and avoid youth unemployment (Biavaschi et al., 2012). Studies have shown that both general education and skills development contribute to employment generations.

Unemployment and Poverty Reduction via General Education

Studies have shown that a workforce that receives vocational training has a higher likelihood of employment than those that do not. (Rojewski, 1997). The researchers tracked individuals who have received a vocational education. Result showed that vocational tracked participants were more likely to be employed than those with limited or no vocational training. Adult workers who were enrolled in a vocational program were more likely to be employed full-time than other adult workers. Education was seen as the most statistically significant contributor to unemployment reduction for 40 developing countries from 1999 to 2007 (Janjua & Kamal, 2011) and enhances people's chances for employment and their earning ability (Van, 2002).

Research was conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to identify employments elasticity and education in selected countries including Nigeria.

Data obtained were analyzed using regression and t-Test. The outcome of the findings demonstrates that education had statistically significant coefficients of over 40% variation with employment (Islam, 2004). This implies that education of the general population which is the workforce contributes to employment. Statistics also shows that between 1929 and 1982, more than 25% of the average annual increment rate of 1.48% in US national output per employed person was due to the improvement in the level of education of the workforce (Denison, 1985). There is a direct linkage between education and employment generations. The higher the educational attainment, the lower is the risk of becoming unemployed. These linkages are knowledge and development.

Knowledge involves cognitive skills, which encompass the ability to understand complex ideas, adapt effectively to the environment, learn from experience, and reason. Cognitive skills encompass foundational literacy and numeracy as well as creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The development of these skills can contribute to structural transformation and economic growth by enhancing employability and labor productivity and helping countries to become more competitive. Low skills perpetuate poverty and inequality. When done right, skills development can reduce both unemployment and underemployment, increase productivity, and improve standards of living. Helping people develop and update their skills makes economic sense (World Bank, 2021).

Unemployment and Poverty Reduction via TVET Skill Training

Quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is widely recognized as having an important role to play in tackling youth unemployment (UNESCO, 2002). TVET emphasizes the application of knowledge, attitudes and manipulative skills for specific occupational fields or clusters of related occupational fields for economic developments and poverty alleviation (King & Palmer, 2006). Various findings, research and studies by international

organizations and experts have confirmed that unemployment and poverty reduction are achieved via TVET. TVET has two direct linkages with unemployment and poverty reduction. These are general education and occupational training (Fien et al., 2009; UNESCO, 2006).

Both general education and occupational training skills enhance people's chance of employment. However, occupational training has a stronger linkage between TVET and unemployment/poverty reduction than general education. This is because occupational training impacts the required employability skills needed by employers. It is not uncommon to see employers of labour complaining about the unsuitability of graduates seeking employment in their organizations. Although these graduates are professionally or technically qualified, they are unemployable because they lack the essential skills or competencies needed in the job for sustainable employment.

Pitan & Adedeji (2012) submits that unavailability of jobs is not the only factor responsible for high level of employment being experienced by Nigerian youths. According to them, many youths lack employable skills that employers are looking for. This is the reason for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

The main justification for occupational training is that it provides ready to use skills, facilitates the transition from school to work, and leads to a higher labour market value in comparison to general or academic training (Cörvers et al., 2011; Wolter & Ryan, 2011; Fersterer et al., 2008).

Across the globe, there is an increasing interest in TVET as a way of imparting occupation-specific skills in youths as well as getting them quickly into the labor market (Hanushek et al., 2016). Most graduates from tertiary institutions only possess textbook theoretical knowledge, which lack adequate practical work experience. This results into extended periods of unemployment. Studies have also shown that

vocational education or occupational training imparts useful life skills on individuals. Lange & Topel (2004) support this assertion by stating that possessing great skills enhances employers or the workplace productivity.

Although general education is desirable because it results in increased learning and productivity, there is a limit to which it can enhance employment generation and poverty reduction. Apart from academic qualifications, or possessing higher education, employers of labour require practical skills appropriate for job fulfillment (Abiodun, 2010).

Malaysian government conducted a survey on university graduates' employability skills and the outcome revealed the reasons why about 60,000 graduates were jobless. Among them are studying of courses that are irrelevant to the market needs, inexperience, and poor English communication skills (Malaysia Today, 2005). Similarly, in South Africa, findings had shown that lack of vocational skills and workplace readiness result in unemployment of several university graduates (Pauw *et al.*, 2008). Studies carried out by Boateng & Ofori-Sarpong (2002) revealed that Ghanaian employers often reject university graduates, who lack the basic skills to complete simple routine assignments.

Every government across the globe is concerned with the responsibility of reducing unemployment and poverty reduction; although, it is obvious that zero unemployment is not feasible due to friction in the labour market. To compensate for this shortcoming, TVET is put in place to enhance earning of the poor and their chances for employments (Van, 2002).

Findings have shown that TVET generates employments in Nigeria via several ways. Some of which include entrepreneurship training (Iloa & Akoji 2013), provision of agricultural and rural employment (World Bank, 2008; IFAD, 2011), skills developments (King & Palmer, 2006; FGN, 2014), training of women and girls (Hartl, 2009), adults and school dropout training (king & Palmer, 2006), and

policy change (Olaitan, 1996; Onu *et al.*, 2013). From the literature, TVET facilitates the employments of Nigerian citizens via entrepreneurship training, provision of agricultural and rural vocational training, training of women and girls, adults and school dropout training, and policy change.

In TVET formal systems, skill acquisition can be acquired in educational institutions of learning like universities, polytechnics, colleges of education (technical), technical colleges and presently at senior secondary schools as well as in skills acquisition centres of various states governments in Nigeria (FGN, 2004, National Education Research and Development Council, NERDC, 2008). Besides, no fewer than thirty-eight employment generation programmes was established in Nigeria in the last twenty years. At present, prominent among them are the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) in 2013 and the N-Power programme since 2016 till date.

Despite these endeavors, the rate of unemployment and poverty in the country is still on the high side and increases annually (Onu *et al.*, 2013; FGN, 2014). TVET skills training enhances improvements in productivity, quality, diversity, occupational safety, health, and income benefits.

Conclusion

The roles the youths play in driving nations for growth and development cannot be under-estimated. To make youths become useful for the society and be economically independent, they need to be empowered. There are several skill acquisition and empowerment opportunities being offered via TVET to enhance good living and economic sustenance of Nigerian youths. Unemployment and poverty alleviation can be achieved through youths' preferences for vocational activities, adequate funding, of TVET programmes, provision of stable electrical power supply and modern practical equipment to TVET Institutions, commitment to youth

empowerment and motivating them to boost their interest in technical and vocational activities.

Recommendations

Youth employment and poverty reduction is a major concern to all stakeholders. In the light of the foregoing discussion on this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. Employability, vocational or occupational skills should be inculcated into Nigerian youths right from school. This can be achieved by redesigning the school curriculum and equip the youths to meet the challenges of the changing economy trend.
2. Employers, government and existing institutions of higher learning collaboration should work in close collaboration with one another to research deeper into the issue of youth unemployment and poverty reduction with the aim of harmonizing the activities of all stakeholders.
3. All stakeholders should aim at promoting youth entrepreneurial programmes and create youth empowerment scheme to reduce unemployment and poverty.
4. Establishment of skill acquisition centers across the country to impart vocational skills into Nigerian youths.

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