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Poverty Reduction Through Technical and Vocational Education; Implication for Nigeria Education

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Abstract

This study was carried out to identify poverty reduction through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria. It reviews the significance of TVET, discusses poverty and its effects as well as the impact of poverty on TVET. The study addresses the factors affecting implementation of TVET programmes and it also explores how TVET can be used as a tool in reducing poverty and enhances development in Nigeria. The study also recommends that in order to combat the scourge of poverty in Nigeria; government should review vocational education policy to strengthen the development of the Nation.

Keywords: Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Poverty Reduction.

Introduction

Africa is one of the blessed continents, yet remains the poorest and the least developed region of the world. Many African countries have been engulfed by series of internal crisis over the past three decades. As a result, poverty has increased throughout the Nations, and it has underpinned the education and national development of the affected countries. Education remains a barrier to advancement for the vast majority of citizens in developing countries. Oraihi opined that many developing countries lack essential raw materials, knowledge and skills gained through formal education and training¹.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has frequently been described as a form of education whose purpose is to prepare person(s) for employment in an occupation. Hamza asserted that it is a form of education, training or retraining which is directed towards developing the learner to become productive either in a paid employment or in self-employment². It is the type of training which is targeted at developing not only practical skills but also attitudes and habits that make the recipient creative, innovative and resourceful. Ibeneme, TVET has a vital and indispensable role in the development of Nigeria such as to improve system level governance, engage social partnership in planning technical and vocational education and training. It is the bedrock upon which a country's socio-economic, technological and cultural advancement could be built³. This type of education according to Gleason (2010) has the economic role of providing qualified manpower by changing the individual and enabling him to use complex technology. The emphasis, therefore, is not only on the provision of skilled manpower for static economy but also continuing to do so for a dynamic one, especially with changing societal needs for technological advancement.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) who is at the forefront of TVET promotion, had the following objectives established at the Seoul congress which include providing TVET for all; to orient TVET for sustainable development to strengthen TVET as an integral component of lifelong learning⁴. UNESCO further described TVET as a comprehensive term referring to 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 occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. TVET courses are designed to facilitate entry into post-school courses and to enhance integration into the labour market. TVET courses include Automotive (Mechanical, Vehicle Painting, Panel Beating, and Electrical), Business Services, Construction, Electro- technology, Entertainment, Hospitality, Information Technology, Metals and Engineering, Primary Industries, Retail and Tourism. Popoola posited that TVET programme is the most adequate tool for self-reliance, economic survival and advancement of knowledge accumulation⁵. African Union, stressed that TVET delivery systems are therefore well placed to train the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce that Africa needs to create wealth and emerge out of poverty⁶.

Poverty is a global phenomenon ravaging most countries in Africa. Corbett defined poverty as a condition of having insufficient resources or income⁷. Poverty is predominantly in the rural areas which are often characterized by poor or non-existent infrastructure and little or no provisions for other critical social services. Nigeria is ranked among the poorest of developing countries in the world and the living standard showed tremendous increase on poverty incidence of 69% (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2011⁸). It therefore implies that for development to be achieved in Nigeria, the Nation should be comparatively free from the overwhelming consequences of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment.

Impact of Poverty on Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET)

There is a concern for poverty reduction in the industrialized countries as well as in developing countries, with a focus on the poor. The cost of education from government to the people has

put additional economic burden on the already poverty-stricken parents. Oghuvbu emphasized that a good percentage of children and youth leave primary, secondary and universities before graduation⁹. These may be due to lack of fund, poor feeding, inability to read, write and so on, resulting from poor beginning, effect of family background. The first goal of the MDGs is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The key to poverty alleviation is economic growth and the creation of employment for all. Africa Union (2011) emphasized that although the primary objective of technical and vocational training in Nigeria is to help alleviate poverty through the acquisition of employable skills, a strategic approach to skills development on the continent cannot ignore the effect of globalization¹⁰. In addition to equipping learners with competencies appropriate to the new form of work, it was felt that these initiatives would assist TVET in shaking off its image as a 'second choice' appropriate primarily for students with lower academic attainments, by bringing TVET closer to the world of work and making learners and their families aware of the advantages of pursuing TVET. The overall objective of the TVET is to provide the economy with qualified and competitive workers and to train citizens able to participate in sustainable growth and poverty reduction by ensuring training opportunities to all social groups without discrimination. These programmes impart not only the traditional skills but also the skills that underlie technological innovation because developed countries need to generate new products and services as the older industries relocate in developing countries.

Factors affecting Implementation of TVET Programmes

There are various factors that hinders the implementation of TVET programmes, which include inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructure, societal neglect of skills training, inappropriate training of TVET teachers, limited institutional and personnel capacity. Graduates lack the requisite skills today as a result of inadequate funding of TVET because instructors, technicians and craftsmen that possess the dexterity of industrial technical acts are not available in the schools due to poor remuneration occasioned by poor funding of the education sector. Abdullahi expressed that one of the most critical problems challenging TVET programmes in Nigeria is rapid decline in public expenditure of higher education relating to rapid increase in enrolment at higher education level¹¹. Ajie lamented that most academic institutions suffer so many set-backs in terms of infrastructure like inadequate accommodation for learning, lack of post-graduate classrooms or lectures theatre, lack of functional facilities for learning¹². Resource constraints may hamper the capacity of government to productively address the wide areas covered by the programme

Indeed, the social neglect of skills training is another factors militating against the implementation of TVET programmes. Fluitman argued that TVET has suffered as a result of the focus on other development goals¹³. Other challenges that must be addressed to provide a TVET education that is accessible to a large number of people is by using quality curriculum that is relevant to the labour market. Current curricula therefore, need to be re-examined with an eye to making them relevant and accessible to learners.

Effects of Poverty on National Development

The developing countries are facing greater national development challenges, even as they are preoccupied with trying to help people living in extreme poverty. Poverty has various manifestations including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood, hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality form, illness, homelessness and inadequate, unsafe and degraded environment, as well as social discrimination and exclusion.

Dawodu stressed that the causes of this state of poverty in Nigeria has variously been traced to, among other factors, corruption, bad governance, debt overhang, unemployment, low productivity, burgeoning population growth, globalization, unfocused government policies, and lack of effective skills training¹⁴. Oraihi and Aitufe asserted that the effects of poverty include homelessness, malnutrition and starvation, illness, crime, violence and antisocial behaviours like Internet Fraud¹⁴. According to Garba all the poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria since independence have yielded very little fruit. Garba further asserted that the programmes were mostly not designed to alleviate poverty; they lacked clearly defined policy framework with proper guidelines for poverty alleviation¹⁵. Afolabi expressed that another issue that affects good programmes including that of poverty alleviation in Nigeria is the issue of continuity as a result of frequent changes of government¹⁶. Each government wants to have its own plan of activities and in so doing abandon the good policies put in place by its predecessor. Obadan identified some factors as the cause of poverty among which are; inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate physical assets, inadequate access to markets, destruction of natural resources, lack of power to participate in design of development programmes and inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin¹⁷. He further expressed that poverty results in increasing the fragility and vulnerability of members of society to external influences. Furthermore, poverty makes production remain largely subsistence due to lack of capital needed for expansion. Labour becomes intensive and marginal productivity remains low.

TVET as a Tool in Reducing Poverty and Enhancing Development in Nigeria

Education of every citizen is essential in reducing poverty and enhancing national development. Technical and Vocational Education and Training [TVET] have been recognised to Nigeria as tools for reducing poverty and enhancing national development. The development of small scale industries through TVET, based on the utilization of available resources in the immediate neighbourhood and the level of technology that is appropriate to the level of education and the skills of the disadvantage groups can enhance job creation, economic growth and poverty reduction.

King and Palmer stressed that TVET is usually linked with improvement in productivity, quality, diversity, occupational safety, health and income benefit. In other words, in terms of linking skills development to poverty reduction, there is a much narrower focus on individual and biophysical/income related aspects of poverty, and less attention to the multidimensional nature of poverty. Many people are living in poverty and face huge challenges in accessing the

skills for healthy and productive lives. The development of skills through TVET is now one of the most often-cited priorities by ministers of education in both developing and developed countries

Conclusion

The technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is an education, training and learning activity which provides knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant for employment or self-employment. TVET have indispensable impacts on national development which is understood as associated with a range of socio-economic imperatives that include challenges of poverty and unemployment. Lack of sustainable education is a major factor in the shortage of manpower in TVET, especially trained teachers in the country. The value of TVET is increasingly being recognised by governments. Despite the abundance of natural resources, poverty still remains prevalent in Nigeria. Nigerian youths are still faced with intergenerational poverty which leads them to all kinds of illegal activities and violent crimes. Poverty could be reduced when TVET are well funded which will invariably develop the nation. Implementation of TVET is focused on development needed to be conducted to general social norms on how learners and people in general are to be treated. TVET by itself does not create jobs; it is therefore important that decision makers also put in place the right policies and conditions to stimulate economic development.

The way forward

In order to combat the scourge of poverty in Nigeria and develop the nation; governments must implement TVET programme policies. The following measures are hereby suggested:

1. Government should review vocational education policy to strengthen national development.
2. Funds should be provided for vocational schools, and vocational training centres for effective functioning of the schools in the country.
3. Vocational training should be integrated into general education and facilitate nationally certified training in small business enterprises.
4. To ensure that TVET is more market driven, it is necessary for the government to involve organizations in the formulation of curricular and in the certification of skills offered.
5. Government need to supply necessary inputs that can improve people's livelihood to effectively reduce poverty.

End notes

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