



Critique of the National Policy on Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria

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Abstract

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Nigeria aims to assist the federal and state education authorities in their effort to revitalize, reform and expand the provision of skills, vocations, science and technology to meet the nation's present and future socio-economic needs. While the set goals in the National Policy blueprint are specifically meant to achieve the objectives of TVET, any form of defect recorded while formulating the blueprint will automatically affect goal achievement. For this reason, the researcher in this paper objectively critiques the provisions in the National Policy on TVET in Nigeria by identifying the relevance and feasibility of the policy objectives, strengths and weaknesses of the policy, loopholes, and problem areas of the government policy on TVET in Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that adequate resources should be allocated to technical and vocational education. Inadequate funds affect the provision of essentials such as well – equipped laboratories and workshops, relevant textbooks and training manuals.

Keywords: National Policy, Technical, Vocational Education, Training, Nigeria

Introduction

In a country where sustainable national development, employment generation, improved quality of life and poverty reduction are at the forefront of their social and economic agenda, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) are critical aspects of learning for the citizenry. In Nigeria, the training of technical and vocational individuals has been confronted with problems from policy formulation to policy implementation. This has overtime produced a ripple effect on our curriculum and the overall development of western education in Nigeria.

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), TVET refer to those aspects of educational processes involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, as well as the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understandings and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. This aspect of education is what Okorafor and Nnajiifo (2017) referred to as an education on the application of skills to support life. Vocational education refers to skill based programmes which are designed for skill acquisition at lower level of education. Vocational education programmes focus on specific vocations for entry into defined workplace. Technical education, in the other hand is not designed for any particular vocation but provides general technical knowledge. This type of education prepares people for entry into recognized occupation at a higher level but usually lower than the first degree (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016; Opoko et al. 2018).

Okoye and Arimonu (2016) while highlighting some of the issues and challenges confronting technical and vocational education in Nigeria submitted that there is a missing link in Nigeria's development policy. Policies are generally formal and written statements that guide the decisions and actions of governments in strategy implementation of programmes. Therefore, the national policy on TVET is a driving tool that guides the development and implementation of technical and vocational education programmes in the country.

While the set goals in the National Policy blueprint are specifically meant to achieve the objectives of TVET, Adelodun (2010) submits that any form of defect recorded while formulating the blueprint will automatically affect goal achievement. For this reason, the researcher in this paper objectively critiques the provisions in the National Policy on TVET in Nigeria by identifying the relevance and feasibility of the policy objectives, strengths and weaknesses, loopholes, and problem areas of the government policy.

Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy in Nigeria

For long, there has been misconception that TVET mean the type of education and training given to people that could never study science or arts in the school system and are therefore regarded as drop outs from the system or those that are not intelligent enough to pass good examinations for entry into higher institutions such as universities. Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is designed to offer people the opportunity of improving themselves in their general proficiency, especially in relation to their present or future occupation.

According to Olaitan (1996) it is established that formal Western education in Nigeria started with vocational education when the first Europeans that came to Nigeria employed our ancestors as gardeners, laundry men, carpenters, cooks, stewards, tailors and even house builders etc. Although these new trades or occupation were not called vocational, they form a major part of what we know today as vocational education (Famiwole et al. 2012; Oluwale et al. 2013).

In Nigeria's education policy document, vocational and technical education is clearly distinguishable from literacy or academic education. Section 5, paragraph 29 of the National Policy on Education notes that vocational education is that form of education which is obtainable at the technical colleges (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). This is equivalent to the senior secondary education but designed for individuals to acquire practical skills, basic and scientific knowledge, and the attitude required to be craftsmen and technicians at sub-professional level (Akanbi, 2017). The 2014 Revised Edition of the NPE (FRN, 2014) section 7, paragraph 40, attempted a more comprehensive definition of the subject as: "those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life." The 2014 edition of NPE (FRN, 2014) section 3, paragraph 49 refers 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 as TVET.

The definitions of TVET in the 2014 edition of NPE are:

- an integral part of general education;
- a means of preparing for occupational fields, for effective participation in the world of work;
- an aspect of life-long learning and preparation for responsible citizenship;
- an instrument of promoting environmentally sound sustainable development; and
- a method of alleviating poverty especially though pre-technical and vocational education.

These definitions are comprehensive, with the final item being the current driver of practice in Nigeria. TVET is also emphasised in section 3, paragraph 58, of NPE (FRN, 2014) as regards curriculum of vocational enterprise institutions (VEI) that it "shall cover all vocational and craftsmanship areas such *Adire* and other indigenous fabric making, artisans, apprenticeship etc."

Policy Objectives

The National Policy on Education implemented in 1977 and most recently revised in 2004 describes main priorities and ways to achieve them for all aspects of Nigerian Education System (Aknyele & Bolarinwa, 2018). The objectives of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria were stated in the National Policy on Education and were believed to have the capacity to advance the economy of the nation if properly implemented and monitored. The objectives as stipulated in the National Policy on Education are to:

- provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business, particularly in craft, and advanced craft at technical levels; (NPE, 1998, sec. 5, paragraph 31)
- provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; (NPE 2004, sec. 7, paragraph 42)
- give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be economically self-reliant. (NPE 2013, sec. 3, paragraph 50)



In pursuant of these, the Federal Government of Nigeria recognized that TVET is an integral part of technological development, a greater proportion of education expenditure shall continue to be devoted to vocational education at Federal and State levels (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, Section 7, pp 35). The policy further stated that, in recognition of the fundamental importance and cost intensive nature of TVET, government shall provide adequate funds for Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria.

The policy document further stated that:

The purpose of development of individuals is to enable them contribute to the development of the society. For this reason, the plan lays emphasis on Technical and Vocational Education as the “master key” to unlocking our future” (Federal Ministry of Education, 2012, pp 2).

The Federal Government further emphasized in its bid to strengthen the TVET programme in Nigeria by stating that:

The ability of Nigeria to realize the vision of becoming one of the twenty largest economies in the world by the year 2020 is largely dependent on the capacity to transform its youths into highly skilled and competent citizens...It is for this reason that commitment to TVET must be strengthened (Federal Ministry of Education, 2012, pp 54).

Relevance and Feasibility of the Objectives

The relevance of the policy plan is that it is built around three result areas of access, quality, and systems strengthening and comprises of ten pillars, spanning all levels of education. The access results area includes the pillars of out-of-school children, adult literacy, and TVET.

Strengths of the Policy

The strength of the policy on TVET envisages the ability to be governed by multi-sectoral governmental bodies. The Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity are responsible for the development of TVET and related policies (UNESCO, 2019).

The governance system is decentralized and a number of actors contribute to different aspects of the TVET system, including:

- The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) is a Federal Government parastatal and regulatory body operating under the ambit of the Ministry of Education. The management of the board is made up of the executive secretary and the directors who give leadership to the various departments of the board. It provides standardized minimum guides for the TVET curricula, and supervises and regulates, through an accreditation process, the programmes offered by technical institutions at secondary and post-secondary education levels.
- The Federal Inspectorate Service performs a number of functions, including the design of monitoring and evaluation instruments for measuring the quality of education. It also works together with the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, the faculties of education, institutes of education and other national and international bodies on curriculum development, delivery and pedagogical practices in secondary technical and vocational education.
- The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council develops curricula for the primary and secondary levels of the Nigerian education system.
- The National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) issues and validates certificates and administers technical and business examinations.

Other organizations involved in administering formal and non-formal TVET include local education authorities, intergovernmental organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and private sector actors.

In addition, recent key reforms regarding TVET include the establishment of more TVET institutions, the development of the Nigerian Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), and the introduction of ODFL/Flexible Skills in the institutions. Flexible Skills Development (FSD) is designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning using ICT tools; and to provide access to formal and non-formal education. FSD is a Commonwealth of



Learning (CoL) initiative which employs a blend of capacity building methods including online training workshops and an online community of practice. ODFL (Open and Distance Flexible Learning) is a flexible and open approach to distance learning to promote access to the labour market.

Weaknesses of the Policy

One of the weaknesses of the policy is that TVET policy in Nigeria does not conform to some of the properties that a good policy should possess. For instance, the processes of implementation, monitoring, supervision, feedback, and evaluation have not been effectively discharged. One weakness lies in the power of the supervisory agency, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

The NBTE is a principal organ of Federal Ministry of Education and specifically created to handle all aspects of Technical and Vocational Education. In addition to providing standardized minimum guide curricula for TVET, the Board supervises and regulates, through an accreditation process, the programmes offered by technical institutions at secondary and post-secondary school levels. The Board is also involved with the funding of Polytechnics owned by the Federal Government. Though the policy recognized the power of the NBTE in monitoring and supervising Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria, programmes that fall within the University Education are beyond the supervising power of the Board. This means that the regulatory power enshrined has been weakened to some extent. In addition to this, polytechnics and other technical and vocational education institutions not owned by the central or federal government are devoid regular funding by the Board. This could partly explain the reason for the decay of technical and vocational schools in Nigeria.

As part of fulfilling the tradition of corporate partnership in governance, the policy failed to identify the involvement of the private sectors. Technical and Vocational Education institutions are expected to liaise with industries to ensure the currency and relevance of their curricula and to introduce new courses in response to the socio-economic and technological demands the nation. This role has not been satisfactorily fulfilled in Nigeria.

The Loopholes

According to the National Board for Technical Education, TVET in Nigeria is facing the following challenges (UNESCO, 2019):

- **Gender inequality:** Gender inequality in TVET has been a long-term problem in Nigeria. The majority of students who enrol in TVET programmes are males, with less than 40% of the total enrolment in TVET being females.
- **Inadequate infrastructure:** Access to TVET is constrained by inadequate and obsolete infrastructure, as promising projects often fail even if they have good pedagogical schemes. There is a lack of practical laboratories, workshops and there are a limited number of lecture rooms. The inadequate infrastructure also hinders institutions' ability to catch up with the latest technical developments.
- **Financing:** The issue of financing of TVET is a topic of key importance in Nigeria. Currently, the budgetary allocation to TVET institutions is barely sufficient for institutions to be sustainable. The share of budget remains low, even though there are indications that TVET students are better integrated into the labour market.
- **Capacity development for teachers and trainers:** There is an inadequate provision for teacher training. As TVET institutions fail to equip teachers with corresponding qualifications and knowledge, these teachers and trainers also fail to teach students and pass on skills and knowledge fit for the present and future labour markets.
- **ICT in TVET:** TVET has evolved from simply training skilled operators to training knowledgeable professionals. However, as institutions often have inadequate ICT facilities to integrate e-learning, TVET institutions find it hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes.

Problem Areas and How to Overcome them

Problem Areas

One of the problem areas that can be identified with Technical, Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria are the hindering factors that impede the development of technical and vocational education programmes. These factors make it difficult for TVET practices to match its policy statements. Some of these factors are: faulty policy and institutional frameworks, policy somersaults arising from instability of the political environment, and lack of political will compounded by the hemorrhage of rampant corruption.

Lack of Institutional Frameworks: Adopting systems that have worked for great nations without adequate consideration of the value structure of the target country may not yield a successful result. Apart from minor structural and organizational changes, very little has changed in the philosophy and curriculum content of education in Nigeria. Education in Nigeria is still designed after Western models and paradigms that have little connection to life in Africa. What this means in the long term is adjusting to different education policies to suit the present educational situation. Education policies in Nigeria have been set aside abruptly. The former Eastern Nigeria government under Nnamdi Azikwe introduced free primary education in 1957. It was abandoned after two years. Earlier in 1955, the then Western Nigeria government pioneered free primary education in the country. It was planned to become free and compulsory and two years, it never became compulsory after all. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme introduced nationwide between 1976-1977 was later abandoned. Other such policies are those of secondary modern school sub-system in mid-1950 through to early 1970. Comprehensive High School Scheme and even the ding-dung policy of school take over by state government and their return to private proprietors and missionaries. Often states not controlled by the party at the central frustrate federal government education policy as it happened to the national policy on education and vice-versa. All these weaken the structural framework instituting TVET in Nigeria.

Political Instability: Laudable educational policies put in place by one government have been either frustrated or totally abandoned by a more powerful rival government or a succeeding one. Succeeding government neither wants to credit the previous one with any success nor desires to continue the pursuance of the previous government policies no matter how benefitting they are to the citizenry. At times the government at the centre powerfully frustrate the propagation of the policies and plan put in place and been implemented by government of opposing parties in states. For example, the then Unity Party's free education at all levels policy and its implementation in the deformed Western State were powerfully frustrated by the then National Party of Nigeria which control the centre from 1979 to 1983. Political instability cause in some cases by coup de 'tat and political unrest also work against educational plan and their implementation.

Corruption: Many people who handle education planning and implementation merely roads through the rank by promotion based on years of service. These are most outstanding expertise in administrative bureaucracy subtended by General Order (G.O) rather than knowledge of what to do. By that, what operates mostly is power play and process prostration based on bureaucratic authority where subordinates who may know the way out are bullied out of action. Planning cannot be effectively done in such an environment.

Conclusion

It has been emphasized that Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Nigeria aims to assist the federal and state education authorities in their effort to revitalize, reform and expand the provision of skills, vocations, science and technology to meet the nation's present and future socio-economic needs. There has been a weak capacity in ministries to promote, monitor and engage stakeholders and policymakers. Incorporating stakeholders at the local and state levels could further strengthen the achievement of the goals and objectives of Technical, Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria. Thus, this paper concludes that there is need for a paradigm shift in the practice of TVET through police review and reforms. It is therefore recommended that adequate resources should be allocated to technical and vocational education. Inadequate funds affect the provision of essentials such as well – equipped laboratories and workshops, relevant textbooks and training manuals.

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