



TVET AS A TOOL FOR DIVERSIFYING THE NATIONAL ECONOMY TO EASE THE EFFECT OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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Abstract

With the continuous fluctuation and declining price of crude oil in the international market caused by a slump in demand and couple with the impact of coronavirus pandemic, there has been a steady decline in government revenue and hence an increase in the country's debt. This decline in oil prices has also accounted for the high level of unemployment, high mortality rate, crime and insurgency among others as the government is unable to provide basic amenities for the welfare of its citizens. Owing to the above mention problems, this paper seeks to address the need for economic diversification through TVET (Technical & Vocational Education and Training) as a source of revenue generation to the government and also as a means reducing unemployment, youth unrest and crime. Empowering people with necessary skills will help to lessen the burden on government as the citizens will be self-sufficient and self-employed making them to be employers of labour. If available TVET options are properly utilized, it will go a long way to reduce overdependence even on imports of goods and services and boost the country's economy. This paper therefore recommends the review of the current TVET curriculum to meet up with international standards and current challenges of unemployment, as well as the establishment of more TVET centres across the urban and rural areas of the country to train more youths, physically challenge people as well as unemployed adults.

Keywords: TVET, Fluctuation, Coronavirus, Unemployment, Economy

Introduction

Nigeria is regarded as the largest producer of crude oil in Africa, with crude oil sales contributing 90% to the country's foreign exchange earnings, yet this has done little or nothing to reduce the high level of unemployment in the country as Nigeria's economy remains a mono-economy (an economic system which depends solely on one major economic product for the sustenance of the economy) since independence, depending only on crude oil as the major source of revenue to the government which is inadequate to provide basic amenities such as good roads, health care, electricity supply for the growing populace with successive government doing little or nothing to secure an alternative source of revenue generation to diversify the economy.

With the current outbreak of coronavirus which has tend to cripple the world economy, resulting in sudden decline or fall in oil prices, Nigeria could lose up to \$20 billion (losing 4.36 million barrels of oil in April & May alone (AIT News) from crude oil sales with oil revenue accounting for one- third of expected public revenue in 2020, this will leave the government with a limited capacity to support the economy resulting in government borrowing to sustain the economy and in addition worsen the country's worsening debt profile and increasing level of unemployment. In this regard, there is a serious need by the Nigerian government to reconsider the need for economic diversification to take care of the ever increasing population and also find a means of reducing unemployment and abject poverty in the country which has resulted in youth unrest and rising crime level all over the country.

Therefore, for Nigeria to become free from the problems associated with a monolithic economy, it therefore becomes imperative for the government to invest intensively in TVET as a means of economic diversification and also as a source of revenue generation because it is an effective means to speed up technological advancement, national development as well as economic growth of the country. TVET is therefore a key player or driving force in promoting sustainable development in any economy. Since the country is blessed with a viable youth population who are unemployed, there is need to equip them with skills which will make them to be gainfully employed and also contribute extensively to the nation's economy through different economic

ventures. With investment in TVET, Nigeria will no longer be a dumping ground for foreign goods as it will be able to produce its own goods leading to a decrease in import.

Technical, Vocational Education and Training

The contribution of education in the development of any country's development cannot be over emphasized. Education serves as a means of acquiring knowledge or a set of skills that will enable an individual to be self-reliant as well as fitting in well in the society where he or she lives. So it is on this basis that TVET is considered. TVET simply means Technical and Vocational Education and Training. It is the education or training process which involves apart from education, the study of technology and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life, comprising of formal (organized programs as part of school system) and non - (organized classes outside the school system). (UNESCO 2015). It involves a wide range of skills development opportunities that is attuned to cater for national and local needs. It is the form of education that places much emphasis on practical skills than theoretical which is a clear deviation of the basic skills in education -reading, writing and arithmetic means that it is meant to impart knowledge and skills for increased efficiency in the world of work, sustainable livelihood, personal empowerment as well as socio-economic development which enhances proper adjustment in knowledge economies and rapidly changing work environment (Okorafor & Nnajofofor,2017). But simply put, it is a training undertaken for the sole purpose of self-development.

The term vocational and technical are inter-related but is often used interchangeably since they are different or distinct in nature. For the sake of clarity, vocational education is a programme based on skill acquisition at the lower level of education for the purpose of gaining entry into a defined workplace, while technical education is designed to provide a general technical knowledge for the purpose of gaining entry into a recognized occupation at a higher level but not necessarily with a first degree. TVET is a lifelong training which cut across all level of education – primary, secondary and tertiary institution as well as work-based training and professional development leading to qualification. Apart from contributing to the development of knowledge, skills and competence of an individual in their chosen career, it has also help people to make informed choices in order to fulfil their aspirations in life and also access the labour market easily due to the professional skill they possess, which means that it has the capability of solving the twin issues of youth unemployment and employability. The lack of skills is also a contributing factor to the high rate of unemployment as well as poor quality and low-paid jobs. An estimated 152 million youths earned less than \$1.25 per day while 621 million youth suffer multiple disengagement from work. (UNESCO ,2015).

TVET can be provided by government or non-governmental organizations or jointly. It is an education which place much emphasis on skill acquisition for employment and entrepreneurship development. It is seen as the key in unlocking the hidden potentials that abound in the world, providing a productive workforce with technological know-how or scientific competence needed to transform the economy. TVET has much advantage to a nation as well as in the life of an individual as it helps in creative thinking, improve effective communication and interpersonal relations skills, facilitates socio-economic development through the adoptions of socially worthwhile practices, helpings individual to overcome disadvantage situations from birth or poor educational background and as well facilitating economic growth by increasing worker's productivity which in turn increases output that exceeds the cost of training.

There is a strong economic reason that exist for the investment in TVET, this stems from the fact that TVET is seen as a source of skills, knowledge and technology that is needed to productivity in a technological based society. Productivity is the platform needed to sustain economic growth as well as wealth creation. Higher skills knowledge and technology are necessary tools for competitiveness in the global and political balance of power that will support global peace and stability (UNESCO 2015).

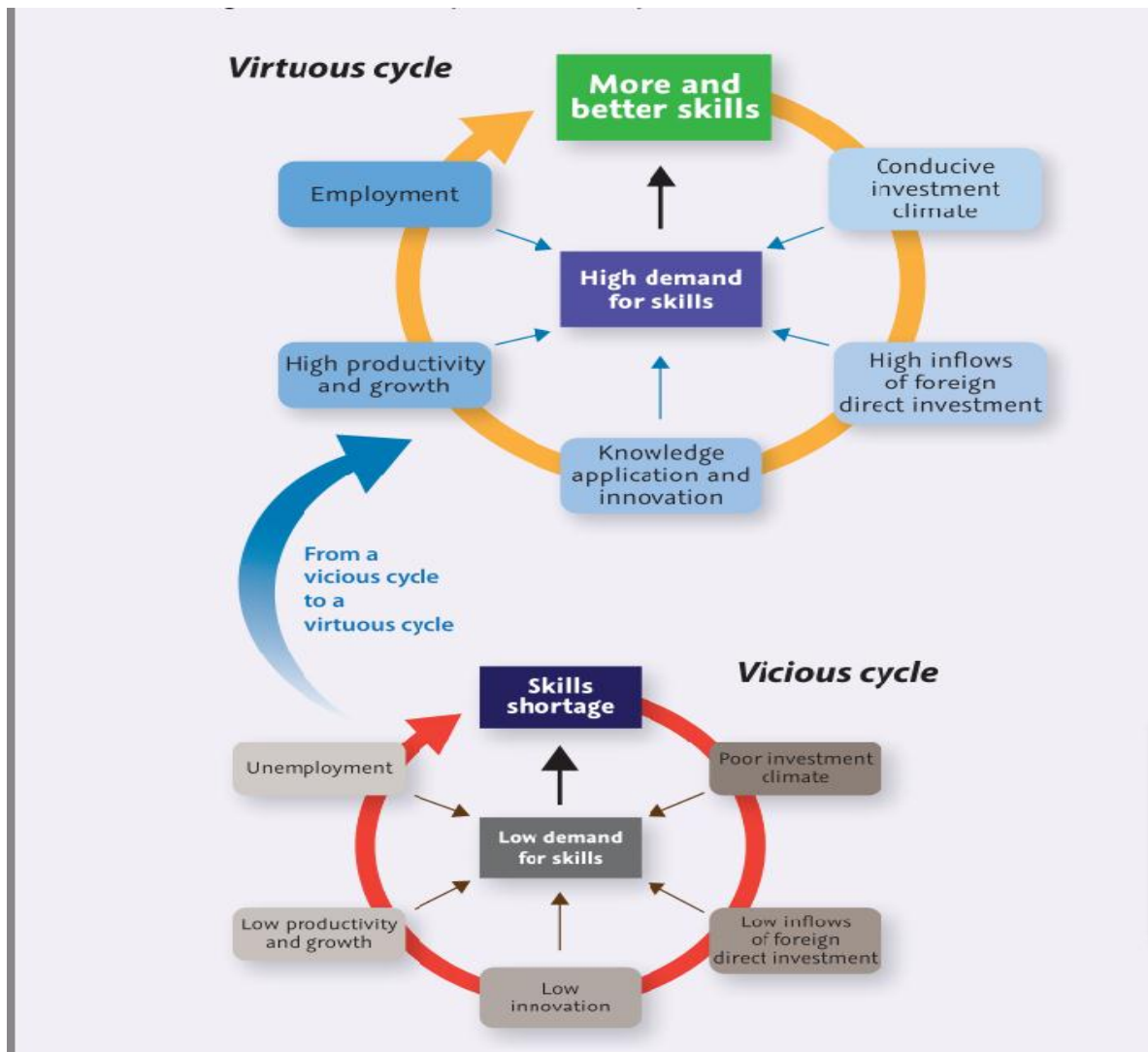


Fig 1: Virtuous Cycle showing Global Perspective on Skills, Innovation, Productivity and Shared Growth.

Virtuous & Vicious Cycle

The cycle in Figure 1 shows the need or importance of TVET to any country. The vicious cycle shows a situation where a problem causes another problem, which is a continuous chain or cycle. It represents the problem created by a lack of or shortage of skills while the virtuous cycle shows the benefits attached to TVET which is the higher the skills acquired the demand for it, which helps to solve the problem of unemployment as well as improving the living conditions of an individual.

CONCEPT OF TVET IN NIGERIA

The history of vocational education in Nigeria is as old as the country itself. Vocational education existed in the traditional form even before the coming of the Europeans. This was a practice within family circle where children were taught various skills such as blacksmithing, carving, sculpturing, weaving, pottery and others, this was passed from one generation to the next (Akpan, et al). But with the coming of European missionaries these skills were improve and most of the schools established by these missionaries had a technical wing for training of students in carpentry, tailoring and bricklaying. Despite the vocational training offered by the missionaries to young people through the apprenticeship system at that time, Nigeria still lag behind in terms of youths with vocational skills owing the lack of interest by the learners and their parents which causes abrupt end to the program (Seyi, 2014). This lack of interest may not be attributed to the fact that most physically challenged or handicapped where also of this vocational training in order for them to be useful to themselves and the society at large (an apprenticeship program).

There is a general misconception among Nigerians about TVET, which is regarded as a training provided for either physically challenge, school dropouts or poor individuals who unable to further their education in tertiary

institutions. This may have formed the misconception that vocational training is only for the lower class - handicapped, illiterate or semi-illiterate people or as a strategy to empower marginalized people in the society. There is no denying the fact that products of vocational education have experienced discrimination when it comes to appointment into key positions in government establishments (Akpan.G et al, n.d). Therefore, the problem of TVET can be traced back to the colonial era which has now become a big problem in this generation. The advance development in global economy, has seen an increase demand for higher skill both in the private and public sector has seen government and even private organizations injecting more funds into TVET which has led to further development in vocational education in the country It is therefore necessary for people especially the youths to change this mentality and embrace technological and vocational training to equip them with the necessary skills which is the necessary tool needed for self-employment and also a driving force behind global industrialization in this 21st century.

The need for technological advancement did inform the introduction of technological subjects in Junior Secondary School as well as the establishment of the National Board for Technical Education, an establishment under the Federal Ministry of Education saddle with the task of handling all aspects of technical and vocational education outside university education, providing minimum standard curricula for TVET and as well supervise and regulate through accreditation process the programs offered by technical institutions at secondary and post-secondary level. The board is also empowered to determine the need of the country's labour force in industrial, commercial and other relevant fields (UNESCO, 2019). The need for technological advancement has led to the establishment of more Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Technical Colleges and Vocational training centre to cater for the growing youth population that may be interested in vocational education. Even with the growing number of TVET institution in the country, Nigeria is still backward technologically due to the fact that over the years, has not done much to support or promote TVET in the country as seen in the fewer number of technical schools establish across the country which shows that government attach more importance to general education than vocational education. Another problem is poor funding of technical colleges as well as polytechnics in the country, inadequate staffing, lack of training of the staffs, poor policy framework and substandard curriculum in order to meet up with recent technological advancement around the world, as well as lack of learning materials which has led to low-level skill graduates been produce by these TVET institutions who are not good enough for the industrial sector. Therefore, it is not just enough to establish an institution, but what is needed is adequate funding for it to achieve its desired goals or purpose. The rapid industrial growth experience in many countries around the world points to the fact that technical, vocational and professional skills is a necessary tool for economic growth and development. Quality TVET is the foundation on which all social and economic development depends on and for this to happen government must show much commitment by injecting more funds into TVET, providing competent and qualified teachers, providing opportunity for internship for the students as well as collaborating with key players in the industrial sector in drafting a curriculum that will meet the needs of the industrial sector. If all these steps may attract private sector investment in TVET. Since youths are seen as the bedrock of any society there is great need for government to invest in them through technical and vocational education. Considering all these, effort must be geared towards making TVET workable, as it is the fulcrum for human and national development which will help to reduce the current unemployment rate in the country which stands at 27.1% in the second quarter of 2020, the highest since 2018. With the support and cooperation by government, industries and civil societies, TVET will make a positive impact on Nigerians as well as the Nigerian economy. Access to both formal and non-formal TVET remains the key to massive employment creation and poverty reduction in the country.

Methodology

Data for this research work was gotten from online sources published in various journal articles and from organisational websites.

Unemployment

Unemployment is a major problem to any country's development and it is more evident now as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic which has rendered many people jobless. As at June, 2020, the unemployment figure stood at 21,764,617 (21.7 million) representing a rate of 27.1 % as against 23.1 % in 2018. (NBS).

Data Showing Unemployment Rate From 2015-2020

YEAR	RATE(%)
2015	10.40
2016	14.20
2017	20.40
2018	23.10
2019	N/A
2020	27.10

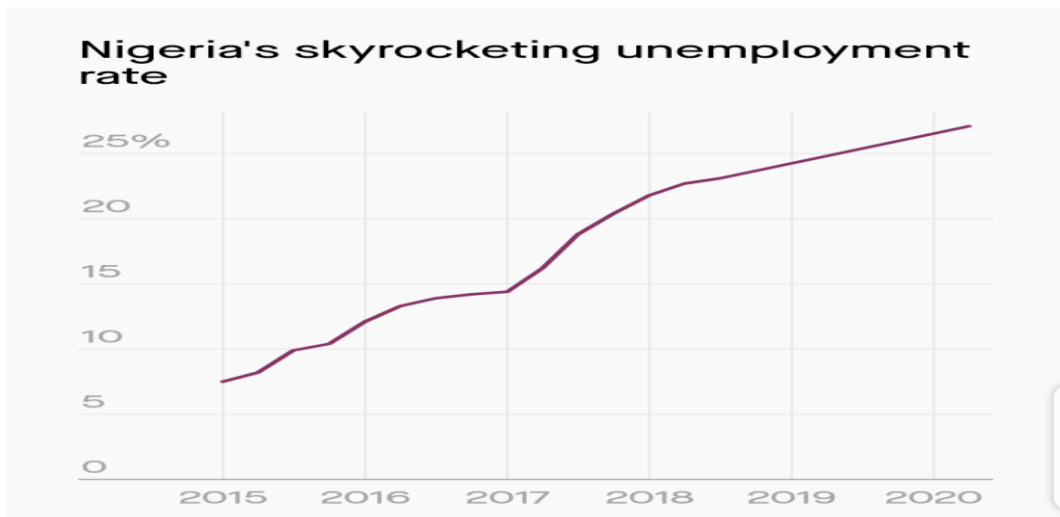


Fig 2

Within this period under review,

- Working age population rise from 115.5 million in 2018 to 116.9 million in third quarter of 2030.
- Labour force reduce to 80.3 million from 90.5 million in 2020. This was 11.3% less than the number in 2020.
- Unemployment rise to 27.1% , from 23.1% in 2018
- Underemployment rise from 20.1% in 2018 to 28.6%
- Unemployment among young people (15-34) was 34.9 % from 29.7 % in 2018
- Underemployment at the same age increase from 25.7% in 2018 to 28.2.

The Labour force rate (LFPR) is given as

I. $LFPR = \text{Labour Force} / \text{Working Age Population} \times 100$ -----(1)

II. $\text{Employment rate} = \text{Number of employed} / \text{Labour force} \times 100$ -----(2)

III. $\text{Unemployment rate} = \text{Unemployed} / \text{Labour force} \times 100$ -----(3)

IV. $\text{Underemployment rate} = \text{Time related unemployed} / \text{Labour force} \times 100$ --(4)

The period under shows how the Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to the increase in unemployment. thereby showing that it is necessary for government to invest in TVET so as to reduce the rate of unemployment in the country.1

Problems Affecting TVET in Nigeria

Gender Inequality: The National Policy on Education states that access to education is a right for all Nigerian children irrespective of gender, religion and disability. The issue of gender inequality in education in Nigeria has been a subject of debate with a large gap existing between the literacy level of boys and girls with the literacy level of girls (age 15 and above) at 59.4% as against 77.4% of boys in 2010. This inequality is also visible even in the education of disable children, with a study conducted in 1990 showing a figure of 57% male and 37% female. Gender inequality in TVET is a major problem in the country with less than 40% of the total

enrolment in TVET being females (UNESCO, 2019). This disparity is due to various issues which include religious and cultural factors. Many young women are unable to access technical or vocational education due to family or community beliefs that women have little or nothing to contribute to productive livelihood or to sustainable growth of the economy. Even when they are given opportunities, they suffer low self-esteem due to the discrimination they encounter especially in a male dominated area which often lead to de-motivation or lack of interest in skill training.

Corruption: Corruption is a cancer that has eaten so deep into every sector of the Nigerian economy and this has also affected the educational sector. Funds allocated to various government institutions are not put into proper use, this funds are either mismanage or embezzled by some of the educational administrators which compound the problem been faced in the educational sector as facilities needed for technical training are not provided which becomes a problem to the teachers as well as the students in such institutions. The allocation of N13.1 billion in the 2020 budget to school feeding even when students are not in school and a paltry N7.5 billion 7.5 billion to TET Fund can testify to the high level of corruption in the country.

Political Instability: The change in government, especially in the era of military rule has affected the educational sector negatively and hence skills development in the country. TVET education has been characterized by policy change or discontinuity, somersaults and reversals which has really impacted on the growth of vocational education as well as technological development in the country as each government in power choose to come out with new policy instead of implementing the policy laid out by previous government. This trend is still observed even in this era of civilian rule.

Poor Policy: A policy is a blueprint which informs the action, direction or decisions to be taken by government or organizations, but the irony is that while they are strategies on skill acquisition and vocational education in the country, a national policy which would have serve as a guide is still lacking. While the intention of the National Policy on Education is to make many students to be technologically literate through the effective delivery of TVET, there are areas of concern which is the non-inclusion of technical vocational education in the Senior Secondary School curriculum and the inadequate provision of enough human and material resources at virtually all levels of technical and vocational education in the country.

Ignorance: The gap in male and female education has arose as a result of religious cultural practice in many parts of the country which discriminates against the education of the girl child. This perception has extended even to the area of vocational education as most parents feel that male children are more suited to science or technological courses. The youth also have their own problem as there is a growing perception among Nigerian youths with regards to vocational/technical education or training which they see as the training meant for physically challenged or poor people in the society. Another challenge is among girls who regards vocational/technical as exclusive preserve of boys and not girls. All these has contributed to low number of youths involved in vocational or technical education. There is therefore need by the government to educate the youths on the need and importance of TVET.

Inadequate Funding: This a major challenge facing the educational sector as the budget allocation by successive governments is always too small to cater for educational need in the country. The current budget allocation of 6.7% does not show the commitment on the part of government towards education or the development of TVET and that does not conform with the United Nations advocacy of 26% of a country's total budget to fund the education sector. The budgetary allocation to TVET institutions is insufficient to sustain the institutions and this has contributed to the production of half-baked graduates from due to the lack of proper training skills caused by the dearth of facilities. Most institutions lack adequate training facilities in their workshops or laboratories due to lack of funds

Poor Attitude to Education by Youths: There has been a poor attitude towards education recently by youths. Although it may be argued that Nigerian youths have acquired much skill in ICT, but these skills acquired is not applied in the right way. They are not in any way innovative skills needed to support economic growth but rather to destroy the economy. There is an existing syndrome of “get rich quick” which has swept through the country just like the current coronavirus pandemic. Youths now see education as a waste of time and even those that attain tertiary institution sees it as just a process of obtaining a degree certificate. This greed for quick money, drive big cars, own big mansions and been popular in the society has reduce the passion for education with them engaging in online crime (yahoo-yahoo) which they see as an alternative to education and a way to make quick money.



Shortage of Qualified Teachers: The availability of technical personnel is very important in this present age as they are the brain box needed to develop the human capital needed for economic development but the lack of it is a great challenge in any country and this is one of the problem affecting vocational education in Nigeria. Most of the graduates from our numerous institutions prefer to work in industries or engage in private due to poor salary paid to teachers both in government and private institutions. Another problem is the stigma attach to teaching which is seen as a job for poor people

Inadequate Infrastructure: The development of TVET has been slow due to inadequate and obsolete infrastructure. The inadequate infrastructure has hindered institutions in catching up with recent technological development in the world due to lack of practical laboratories, workshops and limited number of lecture rooms.

Discrimination against Polytechnics and Colleges of Education Graduates: The HND and B.Sc dichotomy has been a major source of debate over the years, with successive government maintaining the status quo and refusing the plea to change. It has been a great challenge in our educational system that seems to scare youths away from seeking admission into colleges of education and polytechnics. Graduates from these institutions are not accorded the respects they deserve as they are not considered to be at par with their counterparts in the universities with regards to employments opportunities and appointments in government establishments.

Benefits of TVET to the Nigerian Economy

Employability: Employability is a term used in describing a set of achievement –skills or attribute that enables an individual to be gainfully employed or successful in their chosen carrier. But in a broader sense, employability is not all about getting a” job in the present but in getting or a job for the future”. There is a clear distinction between skills required for productivity and that required by a changing labour market due to present economic circumstances. This skill includes; critical thinking, adaptability and teamwork which are relevant requirement in any work environment due to its ability to increase productivity and innovation. TVET therefore equip people with diverse skills and competence which is a promising strategy to reduce unemployment and underemployment.

Job creation: TVET does not only support employability but also helps in the creation of employment. It helps in establishment of small and medium enterprises (SME’s) by empowering those with higher skills to make use of available natural resources for job creation, as well as attracting foreign entrepreneurs to establish industries due to the availability of diverse skill labour thereby offering employment creation.

Redistribution of material wealth: Material wealth does not only involve money but anything that helps to improve the living condition of mankind. Knowledge and skills obtained through TVET be it formal, informal or non-formal helps to empower an individual irrespective of the age, gender, class, disability, ethnicity or tribe and in such way helps to reduce the income gap between the poor and the rich in the society.

Meeting the need of rural economy: The establishment of skills acquisition centres in the rural areas has help to empower poor communities by providing basic education, lifelong learning and income –generating opportunities to school dropouts, underprivileged youth and women with the aim of increasing their farm productivity (majority of people in the rural areas are farmers) and improving their standard living as well as contributing to economic growth.

Reduction in Level of Illiteracy: The traditional apprenticeship program is simply an agreement between a master craftsman and a young person or their parent to provide training for the young person for a certain period of time in exchange for a fee. This is an informal training with no proper educational background and majority of youths who are engaged in this form of skills development can neither read nor write, but with recent development in TVET, these youths are afforded the opportunity of basic education as well as proper skill development which enable them to read and write as well as communicate effectively in good English. Therefore, TVET has contributed in reducing the level of illiteracy in the country.

Conclusion

TVET has been recognised all over the world as a viable option needed for industrial development or growth. Research has shown that it is a key driver of industrial growth, creativity and export driven growth through manufacturing. With the recent coronavirus pandemic which has erupted like a volcano and affecting the world economy, its impact on the Nigerian economy has been greatly felt by both public and private sectors, leading to huge loss of income by the government as well as the private sector and has also resulted in job loss by individual’s working in private companies. The key to economic growth lies in talent, skills and capabilities of human capital and since knowledge and skills are seen as a determinant for both business and economic growth, there is great need by the Nigerian government to invest extensively in TVET so that these skills acquired will



be readily available to support industrial development. industrialization and national development. TVET is considered as the most effective ways of meeting globalization demand.

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