

**ACHIEVING SOCIO-ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE IN NIGERIA THROUGH  
VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION.**

**BY**

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A Paper Delivered at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference (Virtual) of the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro,  
Ogun State, Nigeria Between November 10-11, 2020.

**November 2020**

## **Abstract**

*This paper critically examined the role of vocational and technical education and training to national or national development with Nigeria as its contextual point of reference and analysis. The paper interrogated the problem of productive education citizen's self-reliance and national development. Key terms like 'economic independence' and 'development' were also explained. The paper argued that despite the fact that the Nigerian education system was established at independence as expressed in the National Development Plan and the National Policy on education to focus on mental and vocational training, yet the existing problem is that of helpless execution of these plan and policy due to retrogressive attitude that is still mitigating against a proper implementation of Nigeria educational policy framework. The present educational practices continues to hinder young Nigerian graduates drive and desire to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical use. The paper therefore recommend that in addition to other factors, the Nigerian educational policies and training programmes should be equipped towards youth economic independence, and self-confidence on the part of the citizens and this could only be achieved through vocational and technical education and training.*

**Keywords: Development, Vocational and Technical Education, Regulatory Agencies, Economic Independence.**

## **Introduction**

The term, "education" is appropriately described as the "vehicle for powerful human and socio-economic development". Wards' in Ovbiagele and Igbinedion (2012) argued that "education is a basic fundamental thought process for national progress". The two are also in agreement that positive and instructive education are the basic ingredients for human development. There is no gain saying, that vocational and technical education have assumed irreplaceable pillars in the social, monetary and economic development of many countries in the world

According to Okoye (2002), "an informed man is the noble man who is socially, ethically, mentally and genuinely prepared to fit into, and is valuable to himself and to the general public". It follows logically, that to have the option to fit into the general public and be completely incorporated into it, Nigerian graduates have to secure some professional abilities and capabilities for confidence and for survival.

The Nigeria Skills Training and Vocational Education (STVE) Project is based on the Federal Government of Nigeria's poverty reduction initiatives which, among others, seek to expand access to basic, non-formal and vocational skills education. As a follow up to a request from the FGN, the Bank fielded identification and preparation missions in July and November 2004 respectively.

An appraisal mission was conducted in February 2005 that discussed in detail with the Government the main objectives, design and institutional arrangements for the successful implementation of the proposed project.

Nigeria is a country undergoing economic reform. A productive, competent, and flexible workforce is a prerequisite for furthering economic development. The demand for skilled workers and technicians is already acute and will become ever more intense as the industrial sector becomes the dominant provider of employment; yet the Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) sub-sector is unable to respond to the changing labour market requirements because of its present supply-driven orientation. Its curricula, instructional equipment, teaching methods, and evaluation techniques are outdated, leading to inappropriately low internal and external efficiencies.

The management capacity of the Technology and Science Department (TSD) is inadequate to improve the low-performing vocational and technical schools. Without intervention, the mismatch between school graduates and employer requirements will continue, and private sector-led economic growth, as espoused in the country's National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) will be compromised. The mismatch is due to vocational and technical education teaching outdated skills, with outdated curriculum, machinery and equipment and the lack of consultation with and the involvement of the private sector in VTE.

The paper aims to contribute to the body of literature on the topic under review by suggesting ideas that could impact on staff training, revise/develop curricula, and enhance equipment and improve student's morale in assimilating TVET. In addition it will also, highlight the expected roles of some of the regulatory agencies established for Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria. It specifically gave insight into the roles of the:

- National University Commission (NUC)
- National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)

### **National University Commission (NUC)**

The National University Commission (NUC) was established in 1962 as an advisory agency in the British cabinet office. However, in 1974 it became a statutory body and the first Executive Secretary, in the person of Prof. Jibril Aminu was then appointed by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The NUC is a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Education (FME); having a

Governing Council and an Executive Secretary. In the over forty-seven (47) years of its existence, the commission has transformed from a small office in the British cabinet office to an important arm of government in the area of development and management of university education in Nigeria.

### **The Main Functions of the NUC**

The NUC as a major Educational quality Assurance Agency performs the following functions including amongst others,:

- The commission is empowered to Grant approval for all academic programmes in Nigeria universities
- It is also empowered to Grant approval for the establishment of all higher educational institutions offering degree programmes in Nigeria.
- It ensures quality assurance for all academic programmes offered in Nigeria universities, and also acts as the
- Channel for all external support to Nigerian universities and also supervises the co-ordination of accreditation visits for academic programmes at under-graduate to postgraduate levels.
- It also serve as the agency for the co-ordination of Institutional accreditation in Nigerian universities
- Co-ordination of the development of new instrument used for accreditation exercises
- The NUC also carries out periodic review of instruments used for academic and technical programmes and institutional accreditation in Nigerian Universities and other degree awarding institutions.
- Promotion of institutional culture of quality assurance and self-analysis by encouraging universities to conduct internal ‘mock’ accreditation exercises.
- The NUC through its Inspectorate and Monitoring Department, set global standards for the Nigerian university system and also ensures continuous compliance with the standard set while it is also responsible for ensuring quality input and processes with a view to achieving national development and global competitiveness.
- Finally the NUC evaluate all universities in Nigeria with focus on such areas as academic briefs and master plan implementation, institutional management and governance, students and staff numbers, staff quality and mix, teaching and research quality, infrastructural inputs and other issues pertinent to quality assurance.

- It monitors and inspect from time to time, the certificates awarded on approved programmes in order to maintain quality and standards.
- It also responsible for the collection and collation of information from universities that may assist in the inspection and ascertainment of compliance with standard prescribed by law.
- It also facilitate and promote monitoring of newly established Universities by older ones.
- It supervises the development of database of students, staff and facilitate the monitoring and inspection activities of the Nigeria universities.
- It advises the universities on how to achieve efficient quality assurance in their activities.
- It advises universities on how to take advantages of the development of quality academic programmes, funding and research initiatives.

### **The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)**

The National Board for Technical Education is an organ of the federal ministry of education established by Act No.9 of 11<sup>th</sup> January 1977. The essence of the establishment of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in Nigeria is to manage and handle all aspect and technical and vocational education outside the scope of university education in Nigeria.

The Act establishing the NBTE stated that “the responsibility for the establishment of Minimum Standards in Polytechnics, Technical Colleges and other Technical Institutions in the federation shall be vested in the Minister after consultation with the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and thereafter the Board (NBTE) shall have responsibility for the maintenance of such standards.

The board shall have powers to accredit programmes of all institutions mentioned above for the purpose of the award of National Certificates and Diplomas and other similar awards, and for entry into National and zonal examinations in respect of such institutions”. In compliance with its mandate, the Board is expected to play the under listed roles in the management of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria:

- Firstly, the board advices the Federal Government on and also co-ordinates all aspects of Technical and Vocational Education falling outside the universities as well as make recommendations on the educational strategies necessary for the training of Technicians, Craftsmen and other middle levels manpower for development in Nigeria .

- Secondly, the NBTE also determines after consultation with the National Manpower Board, the Industrial Training Fund and other relevant agencies it considers appropriate, the skilled and middle level manpower needs of the country especially in the industrial, commercial and other relevant fields for the purpose of planning, provision of training facilities and in particular preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and coordinated development of Polytechnics. Such plans shall include amongst others:
- The general programmes to be pursued by the polytechnics in order to maximize the use of available facilities and avoid unnecessary duplication while ensuring that they are adequate for the manpower needs of Nigeria.
- Recommend for the establishment and location of new Polytechnics as and when considered necessary.
- Inquire into and advice the Federal Government on financial needs, both current and capital of Polytechnics and other Technical Institutions to enable them meet the objectives of producing the trained manpower needs of the country.
- Receive block grants from the Federal Government and allocate them to Polytechnics in Nigeria in accordance with such formula as may be laid down by the Federal Executive Council (FEC).
- To undertake periodic review of terms and conditions of service of personnel in Polytechnic and to make recommendations thereon to the Federal Government of Nigeria.
- Collate, analyze and publish information relating to Technical and Vocational Education.
- Consider any matter pertaining to technical or technological education as may be referred to it from time to time by the minister.

### **Statement of the Problem**

What is of interest to this paper essentially, is the need to develop a data base and analytical context for appreciating the nuances in the demographic appreciation and mastery of technical and vocational education and skills in Nigeria and also developing a scientific basis for understanding the factors responsible for the loss of interest especially by the youth in the appreciation of (TVET) in Nigeria.

The second objective of this paper is to attract the necessary attention from the government and also generate the desired concern of the major stakeholders in the private sector of the economy to

the need to place premium on the sustainability of technical and vocational education and training in Nigeria and also appreciate TVET as a major avenue for job creation for the millions of youth in Nigeria as well as show that TVET is a fundamental foundation for achieving the national desire for achieving milestones in both technical and technological development in Nigeria.

The present educational practices in Nigeria is largely inadequate as it still limits young graduates drive to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical use. Also the Nigerian educational training system is yet to be equipped towards achieving economic independence and instil self-confidence in the educated youth. This could only be achieved by embracing vocational and technical education and training (TVET). This gap in the National educational policy and practices in Nigeria is deleterious to the country's desire for rapid development in the comity of nations in the world.

### **Objective of the Study**

1. To conduct an inventory of the level of TVET assimilation and adoption in Nigeria.
2. To investigate the factors and challenges influencing the decline in the study of technical and vocational education and training by students at various levels of education in Nigeria.
3. To suggest solutions towards the sustainable preservation of the important training in TVET in Nigeria by the youth.

### **Literature Review**

#### **The Operational Education System in Nigeria**

Nigeria's formal education system follows a 6-3-3-4 structure introduced in 1982, following the adoption of the National Policy on Education (1977). Primary education begins at six years of age and lasts for six years. Secondary education begins at 12 years of age and for a further six years, comprising two three-year cycles. Technical and vocational education is now offered at the secondary level. Tertiary education is for an average of four years. Pre-primary education is predominantly private and starts at 3 years. Responsibility of primary and secondary educational institutions is shared between Federal, State, local government, communities and private organizations. Local Government Authorities (LGAs) have responsibilities for primary school management, under the guidance of higher levels of government. State governments control most secondary schools and a considerable proportion of the tertiary institutions. Entrance from lower

to higher educational levels is determined by competitive examinations organized by federal and state educational agencies. Since 1992, the Nigerian Government introduced the nine-year schooling program, as the universal basic education, from six to 15 years of age, which is to be free and compulsory. This policy is designed to ensure 100% transition from primary to junior secondary level in order to widen access to basic education and eliminate present gender, social and geographic inequalities in enrolment. The tertiary level is covered by four national commissions that monitor both federal and state level institutions. The National Universities Commission (NUC) is for universities, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for polytechnics, the National Commission of Colleges of Education (NCCE) for colleges of education, and the National Open Universities of Nigeria (NOUN) for National Open University. Educational research is the responsibility of National Education and Research Council (NERC), while the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) and the National Teachers Institute (NTI) are for improvement of education planning and administration, and development of in-service teachers respectively.

### **Technical and Vocational Education and Training**

Firstly TVET is a type of education specifically designed to meet the economic independence, development and social needs of young people and adults by acquiring practical competencies and raise performance standards at different levels of education. It is a peculiar educational program in the sense that it addresses the immediate needs of the citizens within Nigeria. Secondly, TVET philosophy' is built on "imparting specialized skills and knowledge, as well as instilling social and economic skills and behavior patterns" that are essential for successful economic activities (UNESCO 2001).

Thirdly, TVET has the vision and mission to make its recipients functional citizens, who could always be flexible to adjust appropriately to the dynamic society through various engagements in industrial activities, small businesses or subsistence work. Also, technical education helps developing countries evaluate the trend of technological development and ensures that its recipients are adequately equipped to live and contribute effectively in the contemporary dynamic world. Moreover, TVET also equips individuals with skills which enhances their relevance and functionality in the society. Finally TVET is geared towards the production of educated citizens who can effectively work with his heads, hearts and hands (UNESCO 2009).



## **Some of the Major Challenges that Necessitates A Reappraisal of TVET Implementation programme in Nigeria**

- The first major challenge that requires a quick reappraisal of implementations programmes in Nigeria is traceable to the country's weak economy that is characterized by low job growth, high population growth and a growing labor force: The AU (2007) noted that the per capital income of most African countries is less than US\$400 just as the annual real economy growth rate in many African countries is less than 2% thereby limiting the prospects for employment for about seven to ten million new entrants into the labor market.
- The second major challenge that necessitates a quick reappraisal and implementation of TVET initiatives in Nigeria is the shrinking employment opportunities available especially in the industrial sector of the Nigerian economy. At present, the industrial labor force is less than 10% in most African countries.

The third major problem that necessitates a quick reappraisal and implementation of TVET in Nigeria is the existence of educated but unemployable college and university graduates due to poor training and ineffective educational institutions in Nigeria which has left the nation in a state of low productivity. The Federal Government of Nigeria acknowledged that about 80% Nigerian youths are unemployed and 10% underemployed. The hopelessness of hordes of unemployed youths is most likely attributed to their lack of skills. This can be traced to theoretical knowledge they acquired in schools which makes them only suitable for office work that hardly exist. This situation buttresses the mismatch between training and labor market demands. Some have argued that the youths become entrepreneurs and good citizens. But the question is how? This ugly situation has kept Nigeria in perpetual bondage of economic frustration (UNESCO (2009)).

- The fourth major problem that necessitates a quick reappraisal and implementation of TVET programmes in Nigeria is the low quality of training: it is needless claiming that Nigerians pay undue emphasis on theory and certification instead of skills acquisition and proficiency testing. This has also led to the high level of examination malpractices in most Nigerian tertiary institutions of learning, since certification is the only criterion that qualifies individuals for gainful employment rather than what individuals could offer practically.
- Poor funding and management: The cost of running TVET program is very high due to expensive equipment and training of competent instructors. Those at the management level in



Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Key Assumptions and Risks												
<p><b>3.3 Public-Private Partnership Strengthened</b></p>	<p>3.2.8 26 VTE institutions managers/administrators trained            3.2.9 16 Key partners trained            3.2.10 10 career counselors trained            3.2.11 2 Labour market analysts trained            3.2.12 30 PTA/SMC members trained            3.2.13 50 Maintenance unit staff trained            3.2.14 LMS fully operational            3.2.15 2 Policy studies completed            3.2.16 Teachers, VTE managers, key partners, counselors trained in gender and education (quantity as 3.2.3 - 3.2.12).            3.2.17 Gender and education strategy developed and operational            3.2.18 Vocational training program of NCWD revitalized &amp; operational</p> <p>3.3.1 8 Business Development Centres operational            3.3.2 8 Production centres operational            3.3.3 96 consultancies/outreach initiated            3.3.4 Community/public perception of VTE</p>	<p>- FME/TSD annual reports</p>													
<p><b>Activities:</b></p> <p>(1) <b>Access to STVE Improved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure rehabilitation &amp; reconstruction</li> <li>• Equipment and textbooks procurement</li> </ul> <p>(2) <b>Quality and efficiency of STVE Enhanced</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum development</li> <li>• Staff development</li> <li>• Capacity building of FME/key beneficiaries</li> <li>• Gender strategy development</li> <li>• Gender integration into curriculum development &amp; teacher training</li> <li>• Studies</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship promotion</li> </ul> <p>(3) <b>Strengthening JPs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BDCs</li> <li>• Consultancy/Production Centres</li> <li>• Outreach/Exhibition Facility</li> </ul> <p>(4) <b>Project Management</b></p>	<p><b>Inputs</b></p> <p>ADF Loan of UA 30 million and FGN contribution equivalent to UA3 .71 million.</p> <p>Project Budget (UA. million)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1 Goods:</td> <td>8.98</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Works:</td> <td>15.46</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Services:</td> <td>5.73</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Operating Costs:</td> <td>1.06</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Misc:</td> <td>2.48</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>TOTAL:</b></td> <td><b>33.71</b></td> </tr> </table>	1 Goods:	8.98	2. Works:	15.46	3. Services:	5.73	4. Operating Costs:	1.06	4. Misc:	2.48	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>33.71</b>	<p>ADF Disbursement Records            Govt. Disbursement Records            Annual Audit Reports            Quarterly Progress Reports            Bank monitoring of tenders and construction processes</p>	<p>Timely fulfilment of the conditions precedent to entry into force            Timely Govt. counterpart fund provision            Adherence to Bank procedures in procurement activities            Timely availability of goods            Good performance of contractors</p>
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Source: African Development Fund Skills Training and Vocational Education Project Appraisal Report (2005)

## Findings and discussion

Five major issues emerge as challenges to vocational and technical education in Nigeria. These are: (i) the external efficiency of VTE programs is extremely low due to labour market information not informing the design of the curricula; (ii) the quality of VTE programs is also extremely low due to lack of appropriate and adequate facilities, equipment, and staff; (iii) gender inequity, (iv) shortage of vocational education teachers, and (v) the institutional capacity of the Federal Ministry of Education and the Technology and Science Department for planning and administration of the VTE system is weak.

### Low External Efficiency

A precondition for an effective VTE system is the availability of reliable labour market information. Reliable employment-related data are almost nonexistent. Available statistics depict only a small part of the total picture. The absence of valid and reliable labour market data and information means that vocational and technical schools have to plan their programs and curricula

with insufficient information on the types and numbers of craftsmen and women, skilled workers and technicians that are in demand in the country.

Presently, Nigeria has no comprehensive labour market information system (LMIS). This leads to (i) difficulty in finding suitable workers for modern enterprises; (ii) increasing unemployment of school graduates, especially from the general secondary schools; and (iii) unmonitored frequent migration of workers. It is therefore necessary to systematically collect labour market information and share it with relevant agencies in the country. ILO and the National Manpower Board have been collecting some information on the labour market situation in Nigeria. These efforts will be complemented by the current project through the establishment of a labour market information system.

There is mismatch in training and labour market requirements because outdated curriculum continues to be used in training and preparing the needed qualified human resources. Even the curriculum that have been revised do not adequately reflect instructional materials, equipment, or in-service training needs. Neither is the private sector's participation solicited. Textbooks, reference materials, computer courseware, multimedia packages, or other aids to teaching and learning are in short supply or nonexistent. Thus, few benefits from the revised curricula have occurred. Individual schools also need greater flexibility to adjust their programs to local demand, as the process of modifying centrally controlled curricula is bureaucratic and time consuming.

### **Low Quality Training Programs**

There is a serious mismatch between the qualifications of job seekers and the skill requirements of employers, mainly because vocational and technical schools teach skills not relevant to market needs. As most students learned very narrow skills on old machines at schools, they often find themselves unemployed or working as unskilled workers. Most machines in factories, especially those in joint venture companies are new to the students. Therefore, employers have to retrain them to operate these machines. If unemployment and underemployment pose a serious long-term development challenge to the nation, the shortage of skilled labour caused by these mismatches is an immediate problem to be tackled in order to bring about economic growth. 3.2.6 The size of vocational and technical schools differs from one school to the other. Average school enrolment is about 700 students with high teacher-student ratios of up to 1:40 as against the federal government prescribed ratio of 1:20. A Federal Government policy which indicated 50 percent of

graduates from secondary schools are to be admitted into universities, 20 percent in general secondary education, 20 percent in vocational and technical programs and 10 percent in apprenticeship schemes was recently abolished as a result of pressure from practitioners and the general population. The large number of students and small size of vocational and technical schools are a direct outcome of poor education policy and planning.

### **Shortage of Vocational Education Teachers**

A teacher gap analysis was conducted as part of the Education Sector Status Review (2003). A total of 1058 teachers are needed for all the federal science and technical colleges to meet current demand. The analysis shows that all the college's lack adequate numbers of teachers, some do not have vocational teachers at all. The Master Plan for Technical and Vocational Education recognizes this challenge and has indicated in its action plan the training of 20,000 teachers (4,000 annually) for technical and vocational education by 2010.

### **Poor Planning and Administration**

The planning and administration of VTE suffers from a series of problems that constrain the operation of existing programs and the development of new ones. The potential employers of VTE graduates are not sufficiently involved in planning, formulating, and evaluating training programs, as the VTE system was developed without adequate attention to labour market requirements. The administration of vocational and technical schools is also constrained by budgeting and accounting systems that do not permit planners to (i) determine the total costs or unit costs of specific training programs; (ii) estimate the most cost-effective means of meeting identified training needs; and (iii) make medium-term plans on the basis of available resources.

### **Conclusion**

For Nigeria to design and implement programs that could respond to the range of challenges facing TVET, an enabling environment must be created, nurtured and sustained. The problems are not on designing programs but on implementing programs. TVET reforms and attainment of vision 20-2020 should both reflect the philosophy that the tertiary institutions curricula must be based on physical and psychological human needs. This could be achieved through focusing on application of knowledge throughout the growth and development of learners with particular attention to their

special needs, economic independence and individual development. The realization of the aims of TVET is in no doubt the attainment of functionality and self-reliance.

## **Recommendations**

1. Developing awareness for TVET is the first step of reorientation:- i.e a process which encompasses more principles, skills, perspectives and values. It is only when Nigerian leaders and the general public are aware of the contributions of TVET that there can be a position for appropriate re-orientation of the values of TVET in Nigeria. The public must be made to understand that TVET is a strategic educational program for producing a productive workforce that can move the nation forward; rather than being an educational program for the less academically endowed.
2. There is also a need to continuously update TVET instructor's skills and competencies and enhance their working conditions. Education unlocks the door of modernization but it is the teacher who holds the key to the door". Teachers are the hub or pivots on which any successful education revolves. If the teachers perform their task dutifully, there will be a myriad of new technologies in the future of TVET. Constant training and retraining is highly recommended for the instructors; to keep them abreast of the changing dynamics in theoretical knowledge, technical and pedagogical skills and new technologies in the work place. Admission into all teacher programs (not only TVET) should be raised higher and based not only on content knowledge but also on aptitude and positive attitudinal change to TVET.
3. Adequate monitoring and evaluation need to be carried out on regular basis. The aim of such activities should be to identify areas of needs of learners and that of employers. This entails developing labor market information system, linking with jobs network locally and nationally. Also career guidance job placement programs and feedback/monitoring system should put in place.
4. Finally, constantly reviewing of TVET curriculum to infuse latest developments in technology, implement industrial researches, introduce and promote innovations, provision of relevant physical resources with the desire for high quality training should be made available for the implementation of the relevant TVET curricular. These exercises will prove more effective if prospective

employers of labour also participate in the design, review and implementation of the TVET curriculum.

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