

Funding Technical Vocational Education and Training: Emerging Issues and Strategies for Sustainable National Development

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Abstract: *Educational aspirations are elusive if not adequately funded; this is particularly true of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) which is vocational oriented. Funding is essential in every educational programme to enable it cater for the needs of the society. TVET by its content is critical to acquiring sustainable national development goal, as it is concerned with raising skilled manpower desired for economic growth and development. However, the contribution of TVET to sustainable national development has been undermined by inadequate funding from appropriate agencies of the government. This has become a great challenge to TVET development and the national economy at large. The paper reviewed the concepts and objectives of TVET, emerging issues and strategies for funding TVET to achieve sustainable development. In conclusion, TVET is believed to be vital to the economic growth and development of the nation by its provision of desired skilled human capital resources. Based on the avowed role of TVET, adequate funds should be provided for the programme development and alternative sources of funds as canvassed be explored to achieve TVET objectives and sustainable development of the nation.*

Key words: *Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Sustainable National Development, Funding*

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Introduction

There has been a growing awareness of the significant role that Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) play in the development of any nation. Usman and Pascal (2009) affirmed that since education is considered the key to effective development strategies, Technical Vocational Education and Training must be the master key that would alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable

development.

However, it is clear that no meaningful progress can be achieved, no matter how well it is planned, structured, organized and handled when the enabling funds are lacking. The whole efforts will amount to nothing in absence of adequate funding. Funds are essential for individuals, organisations or even government institutions to achieve desired projects and programme objectives. TVET programme is geared towards human capital development by providing essential work skills and necessary self reliance of recipients and labour force to the economy. TVET is a laudable government programme that has the potentials to create self reliant work force. Onweh (2010) asserted that TVET involves the provision of skills, knowledge, attitude and value needed which prepares people for the world of work which is capable of helping government realize the dream of self reliant economy and citizens. TVET as an economic oriented programme demands a lot of fund to succeed and when adequately funded at the various levels of education, every sector of the economy will be impacted and improved. Adequate funds should be provided as a critical input to ensure success in every organisation or programme like TVET. Thus, TVET being a key player in the labour market requires adequate investment and its funding gives a lift to sustainable economic and national development.

Concept and Objectives of Technical Vocational Education and Training

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) defined Technical Vocational Education and Training (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. According to UNESCO (2009), Technical Vocational Education and Training include learning aimed at developing skills in the practice of certain trades, as well as learning aimed at preparing for entry into the labour market in general. UNESCO (2009) maintained that in both cases, learning may be geared towards direct access to the labour market or lay the foundation for access to higher education and training with specific trades in view. It added that TVET encompasses programmes that provide participants with skills, knowledge and aptitudes that enable them to engage in productive work, adapt to rapidly changing labour markets and economies, and participate as responsible citizens in their respective societies. Agindotan (2016) supported the above definition when he stated that TVET is an education which develops craftsmanship, practical experience and practical problem-solving. Thus, TVET provides a body of knowledge and skills essential for learners to meet technological and industrial needs, self reliance and economic development.

The concept of TVET embraces the importance of innovation, competitiveness, and productivity. Considering that all these are pre-requisite for national development, National Board for Technical Education (2011) explained TVET as the acquisition of relevant competencies, qualifications and recognition of skills, decent work opportunities, lifelong learning in and related to employability and world of work, advancement and fulfillment. This implies that TVET involves the “Technologies”, “theories” and related sciences, as well as the acquisition of practical skills related to various aspect of the economy, and it emphasizes education and training that focuses on delivering skills and knowledge for specific industries.

Onweh (2010) opined that TVET involves the provision of skills, knowledge, attitude and value which prepares people for the world of work. This indicates that through TVET people acquire skills, knowledge, attitude and values which help them participate in production of goods and services and become relevant in the labour market for employability and National development in any economy. It harmonizes and interrelates with industry and labour market in

terms of resources for training as well as occupational and production standard. Technical Vocational Education and Training is an instrument for promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development via alleviating poverty and bequeathing one with lifelong learning that enable self reliance and employability, which promotes National development.

Harnessing the resources of an economy as a function of TVET enhances the production of enlightened skilled manpower development and increased productivity. Matthew (2015) opined that Technical Vocational Education and Training is a sub-field of general education which enhances productivity by providing the needed man power. A successful TVET participant is also motivated for a desire for self-development rather than depending on white collar jobs. Since TVET involves the development of skilled manpower and self-reliance; it was regarded as a core carpenter of national development strategy in the international community prior to the 1980's, but gradually it was neglected due to high cost of funding and support. Undoubtedly, national development of any country depends on the strength of TVET to provide access to skills and entry routes into the labour market. TVET plays a key role in determining whether companies will be able to compete in national and international market (Onweh and Onyeukwu, 2015). For under-privileged and marginalized groups in particular, it can be an important route towards a better life, as it enriches individual's life and provides the competencies which are necessary in an economy like Nigeria.

TVET is a key player in the labour structure and activities, therefore adequate, investment in TVET gives a lift to the stagnant economy like Nigeria. It is advantageous for any government of a country to invest in Technical Vocational Education and Training. No programme serves as a tool for combating unemployment and poverty as TVET and Nigerian government under the Federal Ministry of Education recognizes this and gives priority to TVET development through the establishment of National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). The FRN (2013) listed the following goals of Technical Vocational Education and Training thus:

1. To provide an applied science, technology and commerce particularly at the sub-professional level.
2. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for the agricultural industry and commercial and economic development.
3. To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge towards solutions for environmental problems.
4. To offer an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
5. To offer training and necessary skills that will lead to the production of craftsman, technicians and other skilled personnel will be enterprising and self-reliant.
6. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the necessary complexities of technology.

With these goals therefore, TVET is a type of education deliberately designed for the development of skills and knowledge that are useful to both the individual, society and the nation as a whole. Basically, TVET's concern is to prepare for the nation individuals whether in recession or boom with the right skills, knowledge and attitude needed to function in different positions and jobs. For the benefit of the country, TVET institutions should strive to be creative and flexible as much as possible in designing a range of training programmes to fill the variegated labour demand.

Concept of Sustainable National Development

Sustainable development implies the practice of maintaining processes of productivity

indefinitely (natural or human made) by replacing resources used with resources of equal or greater value without degrading or endangering natural biotic system. Umezulike, (2014) asserted that sustainable development involves the development that meets the needs of the present and not compromising the ability of future generations to meet its own needs. Hence, sustainable development is one that tends to fulfill present needs of the people without impairing the capacity of the future generations to satisfy or meet their own immediate needs and desires. Sustainable development demands responsible use of scarce resources, avoiding wastages and destruction of natural biotic and endowments. For this reason therefore, there is need to enhance the quantity and quality of human resources to advance in knowledge and diffuse new ideas and objectives to stop economic retardation and enhance economic development necessary for self sufficiency and national development.

Supporting the need for sustainable development, Aishatu and Musa (2013) identified some features/objectives of sustainable development to include:

- 1 To respect and care for all forms of life
- 2 To improve the quality of human life
- 3 To conserve the earth's vitality and diversity
- 4 To minimize the depletion of natural resources
- 5 To change personal attitudes and practices towards the environment
- 6 To enable the communities care for their own environment
- 7 To reduce poverty
- 8 To improve and promote good governance
- 9 To encourage urban redesign

Corroborating with the above objectives, Hassan (2016) opined that sustainable development is concerned with the carrying capacity of natural system with social, political and economic challenge faced by humanity. From the foregoing, it could be seen that sustainable development is essential in order to care for and protect the natural resources from depletion and wastages to ensure reasonable consumption and application of these resources. To achieve the identified objective of TVET which are prerequisite to realistic national development, adequate funding of TVET is imperative. This will ensure enhanced and efficient economic and manpower development.

Emerging Issues in Technical Vocational Education and Training

There are many fundamental issues that need to be adequately addressed in the implementation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in order to ensure quality and effectiveness. These include instructor training and competence, linkage of TVET to the labour market facility and sufficient exposure of learners to the learning tasks. With respect to instructor training and competence, African Union (2007) noted that the delivery of quality TVET is dependent on the competence of the teacher which could be measured in terms of theoretical knowledge, technical and pedagogical skills as well as being abreast with new technologies in the workplace.

Regarding the issue of linkage of TVET to the labour market, the African Union (2007) noted that the ultimate aim of technical and vocational education and training is employment hence, TVET programmes must be linked to the job market in order to enhance its socio-economic relevance, indeed, for quality TVET to be achieved, there must be adequate facilities for effective training. Obviously, without adequate facilities, the students would not be able to acquire the envisaged skills for paid or self employment and their education could then be

considered a waste.

For high quality TVET to be achieved, the learners must be sufficiently exposed to the learning tasks for a reasonable period of time and they must be trained to reach the minimum standard in their chosen occupations. This is in compliance with one of the principles of vocational education developed by Charles Prosser in 1949 which states that “For every occupation there is minimum of productive ability which an individual must possess in order to secure or retain employment in that occupation. If vocational education is not carried to that point with that individual, it is neither personally nor socially effective”. This implies that if the students are not properly trained to perform up to that minimum standard, all the training they undergo is wasted.

Impact of Funding Technical Vocational Education and Training on Sustainable National Development

Technical Vocational Education and Training is considered a powerful tool to prepare youths for the labour market and provide lifelong learning opportunities to adults. It plays a strategic role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2017). To achieve the identified objectives of TVET generally which are prerequisite to realistic national development and take care of the emerging issues in the implementation TVET programme, adequate funding is imperative. Funding is a major ingredient in TVET and education generally, the absence of adequate funding constitutes a serious drawback to successful implementation of TVET education in Nigeria. Fund as a body of facts, principles and theories deal with the raising and use of money by individuals, businesses, institutions and government. Without finance no organization can be set up. TVET programme demands adequate funding. Okojie (2013) submitted that funding affects the facilities to provide for effective teaching, learning and research activities, this in the long run impacts heavily on the quality of education and the achievement of sustainable national development objectives of the nation. The author noted that there is serious need for funding of TVET considering the underlying reasons:

- 1 The investor will benefit through sufficient workforce employability, high labour productivity and economic growth
- 2 Participating individuals will move out of poverty
- 3 Entrepreneurs will meet production targets
- 4 Nigeria as a country will achieve a range of development objectives including greater competitiveness.

Despite the fact that funding is imperative to sustenance of TVET; it has been observed that poor funding is a major obstacle in achieving the quality, growth and progress of TVET programmes in Nigeria. Akpokinovo, in UNESCO (2017) stated that there is little or no funding in Nigeria, because attention or priorities are not placed on skills development. The researcher added that right now, funding of TVET remains a mirage due to the economic recession that engulfed the country. Okeke and Eze (2010) observed that sufficient fund has not been channeled to education and particularly TVET which is skill oriented and with capacity to influence sustainable development. The financing of education in Nigeria has been dependent upon the ideology upheld about education by the various ruling political parties and military regimes. The TVET's poor funding attitude by Nigerian government dates back to the colonial days. Colonial government did not prioritize TVET; as a result, Nigerians looked down on the programme and pursued university education in anticipation for white collar jobs and air conditioned offices. Thus, TVET suffered and is still suffering serious neglect at the post-

independent era.

Funding of education was the responsibility of the federal and state governments, but the lean financial resources of some states could not sustain some of the programmes in those states, hence, one type of levy or the other was imposed on the beneficiaries of these programmes. After the Nigerian independence, education has been in a state of transition under the pressure of increased number of students enrollment and rapidly rising costs, new organizations are being created that are capable of changing the educational landscape. The traditional, independence and autonomy of institutions of learning are giving way to state or national coordinating bodies. This had led to increased governmental participation in the affairs of educational institutions in our country. Therefore, if the government is committed to funding TVET, then adequate funding of TVET programme is a sine qua non.

Strategies for Funding Technical Vocational Education and Training

Despite the priority displayed by the states and the international community to skills development, TVET remains largely underfinanced. UNESCO (2017) confirmed that the reason for this is firstly because it is expensive compared to general education (given the high cost of material, equipment and facilities), and also because of the low share of public budget dedicated to TVET compared to other levels of training.

It is clear from evidence that federal, state and local governments cannot handle this TVET alone because of heavy financial burden in respect of other administrative overheads and infrastructural facilities which government has to bear. Presently, cases abound where many tertiary institutions offering TVET programme in the country do not have adequate accommodation and instructional materials because of the cost involved in providing them. If an effective TVET programme is to be successfully achieved, then comfortable and encouraging learning environment and atmosphere need to be provided. This necessitates a heartfelt call on the federal government to completely take over the funding of all important aspect of TVET.

There is also need to diversify strategies for funding TVET given the heavy financial burdens on the government at all levels. Umezulike (2014) suggested that strategies and ways of sourcing funds for TVET include:

1. Grant funds for TVET from local governments
2. Establishment of consultancy services by school management
3. Assistance from non-governmental/philanthropic organizations
4. Support/donations from Alumni Associations
5. Academic/Social clubs donations/support
6. Religious bodies support/donations
7. Contributions from Authorities/Management of various institutions
8. International/foreign Assistance
9. Periodic review of programme
10. Separation of TVET from other general education for budgetary allocations
11. Judicious use of funds
12. Joint partnership between government and private sector
13. Grants/loans from financial/ Non Governmental Organizations, etc

The above sources of funding are viable opportunities of supporting TVET when well explored. It is important for those managing TVET institutions to be aware of these conservative and alternative sources of funding and know how to access them and not only relying on government sponsorship and sporadic interventions.

Conclusion

Technical Vocational Education and Training is vital to the economic growth and development of the nation by its provision of desired skilled human capital resources. However, fund constitutes one of the most vital ingredients in the smooth running of any system. Proper funding would improve the quality of TVET programme and enhance the production of qualitative graduates and self-reliant youths for the development of present and future of the Nigerian economy.

Through diversification of sources of funding, larger resources are available for financing TVET programmes. Prudent use of available resources, stricter accountability, improved organizational structures and proper dedication of available funds to areas of actual needs would ensure success of TVET programmes. In addition, through Private and Government partnership, Technical Vocational Education and Training would be adequately funded and strengthened as the master key that would alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Ministry of education should increase its budgetary allocations particularly on TVET to at least 26% of GDP as recommended by UNESCO.
2. NBTE and other agencies of government should develop a mechanism to monitor TVET institutions income and expenses to ensure accountability.
3. NBTE should ensure judicious application of funds by institutions administrators.
4. Administrators of vocational institutions should ensure the exploration of opportunities to make better use of existing resources.
5. NBTE should ensure genuine generation and streamlining of capital investment, supported by dedicated public investment banks or loan guarantee mechanism.
6. NBTE should ensure adequate provision of incentives to TVET providers including material support as well as financial and fiscal incentives.
7. Financial records of TVET institutions should be subject to EFCC investigation to enable the prosecution of erring staff involved in financial embezzlement or misappropriation of TVET funds.
8. Extant laws should be enacted to ensure that organizations respond to financial obligations towards funding of TVET institutions.

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