TRAINING IN LIFE AND PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
To realize the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) goal of meeting quality education for all young people and adults through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes, this study examined the extent to which secondary and post-secondary education curricula incorporate life and practical skills acquisition. The benefits of promoting the interest of youths who are aggressively seeking admission into Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the option of Technical and Vocational Centers (TVCs), which will offer them opportunities to acquire training in practical skills, rather than waiting endlessly for the former were also emphasized. The three research questions raised in the paper were intended to initiate government's interventions in promoting the establishment of more vocational and technical institutions to provide access to teeming HEI admission seekers. The study suggested prompt and proper implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system and the establishment of more TVCs with a view to laying a strong foundation for the acquisition of relevant vocational and technical skills for Nigerian youths, some of who may still seek university degrees in the future if they so desire. Also, intervention strategies like: teaching entrepreneurial and life skills, mind-building subjects and involvement of community-based experts to partner with the schools for balanced training in theory and practice, were also suggested in the paper.

Keywords: *Technical and vocational skills, Life skills programmes, Innovative and vocational enterprise institutions*

Introduction

Post-secondary education is education at various tertiary levels such as technical and vocational institutions, monotechnics, polytechnics, colleges of education and universities. In 2013, Nigeria appeared to well serve with these different levels of institutions more than any other country in Africa but whether the number and patronage are adequate is another matter for evaluation. Available data in October, 2018 put the federal, state and private post-secondary institutions as: technical colleges (155), colleges of agriculture (33), monotechnics (21), polytechnics (120), colleges of education (151) and universities (165).

In Nigeria, universities attract the largest percentage of candidates who applied for Higher Education (HE) while, Raji (2010) observed that the maximum of 23.1% of applicants for university education in Nigeria were admitted between 1987 and 2008 and that the pick was obtained in the 1998/1999 academic session. According to Olayinka and Adedeji (2013), the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME) was written by over 2.1 million candidates in 2013 whereas there were about 500,000 spaces in the top three most patronised institutions, namely, universities, polytechnics/monotechnics and Colleges of Education (CoE). In 2017 and 2018 respective years, 1,722269 and 1,653,127 candidates applied for HE, while the universities admitted 418,298 and 422,245 candidates. The polytechnics/monotechnics admitted 73658 and 71,652, while the CoE admitted 74,763 and 55,866 candidates respectively (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The question is: what happens to the remaining candidates? Another is what can Nigeria do to promote the interest of her youth and HE seekers to access other levels of education like Vocational/ Technical institutions which hold the ace for better functionality, entrepreneurship and practical skills training, individual survival and employment compared to less functional education offered at the higher levels. It is very clear that many potentially qualified candidates have been excluded and are likely to be idle hands and minds that could turn subversive. This study therefore explores avenues that the teeming youths who desire post-secondary education are directed to functional life skills centres and institutions to get usefully busy, earn some good living, even as they wait or participate to go further to the university level in the nearest future.

The Second Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) seeks to achieve universal primary education while the third Education for All (EFA) goal is that 2015, learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate and life skills programme. In the instant, Nigeria's ability to achieve the above international goals set for the world by 2015 is doubtful. Even then, there is need to explore what Nigeria can do to address at least in post 2015 development plans.

Literature Review

Vocationalisation of Education: the key to Technological Development

Education is an instrument '*par excellence'* for effecting national development in Nigeria (FRN, 2014). Nigeria, like any other country relies on this sector heavily in her attempt to make her goals relevant to the needs of the citizens and the society.

Policy provisions on Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014: 24) appraised the *meaning* of TVE as:

1. those aspects of educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and
2. the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

   Furthermore, it is

   a. an integral part of general education;
   b. a means of preparing for occupational fields and effective participation in the world of work;
   c. an aspect of life-long learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
   d. an instrument for promoting environmentally-sound sustainable development; and
   e. a method of alleviating poverty.

The goals of TVE are to:

1. provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels;
2. provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;
3. give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self - reliant economically;
4. to provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man;
5. to give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies; and
6. to enable our young men and women have intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology in our environment and our world at large.

The **occupational areas** of TVE, according to Ekpeyong, (2005), include:

1. Technical Education: (i) Engineering technology and related fields; (ii) Electrical/Electronic Technology and related sub-fields; (iii) Building technology and related sub-fields and (iv) Automobile engineering and related sub-fields.
2. Business Education: (i) Office Management or Secretarial Studies (ii) Accounting Studies (iii) Distributive Studies (iv) General Business Studies.
3. Agricultural Education: with specialisations in agronomy, soil science, fisheries and forestry.
4. Home Economics: with concentration on home management, food and nutrition, clothing and textiles.

Institutions Offering TVE in Nigeria

In Nigeria, teacher preparations in these courses are available in Technical Teachers' Colleges, Polytechnics and a few universities. Examples are the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, University of Benin, University of Uyo and University of Lagos. Some others are Covenant University, Lagos Business School, etc.

According to Bassey, Aniefiok, Uduak and Akaniyene (2007), one of the national philosophical objectives of Nigerian education is to build a

self-reliant nation. This implies that emphasis be placed on effective teaching and learning of technology education in schools. Steps already taken by government in respect of furtherance of technology education to include the:

i. pegging of approved quota for admission into the universities at sixty percent (60%) for science and technology-related courses and forty percent (40%) for arts.
ii. establishment of specialized universities of education, of business, of agriculture, of science and technology at federal, state and private levels.
iii. introduction of *Junior Engineers, Technicians and Scientists (JETS)* competition in all secondary schools.
iv. establishment of special science secondary schools in some states of the federation. Wesley School of Science is an example of science based secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria.

This is really a step further to promoting inclusiveness in the planning and provision of secondary and post-secondary education in Nigeria.

Role of Technical Vocational Education in National Development

Technical and Vocational Education helps to:

i. reduce the burden on higher education as many candidates will take technical option at the expense of general education which is the case in many developing countries;
ii. provide a part of skilled manpower for foreign investment;
iii. reduce youth unemployment as a result of the acquisition of employable skills;
iv. lead to transformation of attitudes among youths to favour occupation where there are employable prospects;
v. lead to increased relevance of schooling to active occupational future in the quality; and skill levels of the working population;
vi. lead to rapid economic development and prosperity arising from improvement;
vii. reduce poverty through access to higher income occupation for those who do not succeed academically in general education; and
viii. spur industrialisation as experienced by USA, India, China, Japan, Germany, Russia.

Modalities for achieving inclusiveness

In Nigeria's 6-3-3-4 educational structure, the foundation for the TVE has been the '*3-3'* aspect. The first '*3*' (Junior Secondary School – JSS) is the pre-vocational training programme offered to students to:

i. introduce students to the world of technology and appreciation of technology and to arouse their interest in a vocation after JSS and professionalism later in life.
ii. acquire technical skills
iii. expose them to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world of work and to
iv. enable youths develop an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

The second '3' (Senior Secondary School – SSS) is the stage at which students are sorted into the secondary school or technical college. It is the stage at which students who prefer the TVE choose the technical colleges.

RQ.1: How has governments intervened in achieving the goals of TVE in recent past?

Government has formulated some notable policies on how to monitor the modality of providing functional secondary and post-secondary education.

1. After the JSS level, students with appropriate interests could proceed to technical colleges where the curricula programme comprise:
   a. General education.
   b. Theory and related courses.
   c. Workshop practice.
   d. Industrial training/production work.
   e. Small business management and entrepreneurial training.
2. For effective participation of students in practical work, the *teacher-student ratio* shall be kept at 1:20.
3. Trainees completing technical college programmes shall have three options:

a. Secure employment either at the end of the whole course or after completing one or more modules of employable skill;
b. Set up their own businesses and become self-employed and be able to employ others;
c. Pursue further education in advance craft/technical programme in post-secondary (tertiary) technical institutions like science and technical colleges, polytechnics or colleges of education (technical) and universities.

Admission Requirements (Technical Colleges)

1. Junior School Certificate (JSC), and
2. Evidence of aptitude in technical courses plus a reasonably good performance in Mathematics and Science.

RQ. 2: How can the government and educational institutions further intervene in the provision of TVE Programmes?

A first step is to bring back and promote the City and Guild programmes (C&G) and invest heavily in its success. All the 147 Vocational Education Institutions (VEIS) in Nigeria are private initiatives (NBTE, 2018). Governments can regulate curriculum and standards to internationalise the programmes. This entails internationally examined courses like *Beauty and Complementary Therapies, Building Services Industry, Business Skills, Construction, Creative Arts, Engineering, Hairdressing, Health and Social Care, Hospitality and Catering, International English, IT, Learning, Manufacturing Industry, Media and Photography, Oil and Gas, Retail and, Warehousing, Security Industry, Transport Maintenance, Travel, Tourism and Aviation*, etc.

Career Ideas

City and Guild's career ideas help its prospective clients to see what would suit them best, what qualifications they need and even how much they could earn. The careers listed in alphabetical order are: *Administrator, Automotive Mechanic, Beauty Therapist, Builder, Childcare Worker, Creative Designer, Customer Service Advisor, Engineer, Finance, Hairdresser, Head Chef, Health and Social Care Assistant, IT User, IT Worker, Landscape Gardener, Legal Secretary,*

Manufacturer, Photographer, Plumber, Retail Assistant, Security Officer, Sports Coach, Street Works Operative, Social Work, Teaching and Classroom Assistant, and Travel Advisor. Others are Music, Arts and Crafts, Computing, Event Management, Waste Management, etc. The C&G offers a wide variety of qualifications so that there is something for everyone - from those starting out in their careers to senior managers and master craftsmen. Its qualifications can be undertaken in the workplace in the classroom or workshop - or a mixture of the two. The course leads to the award of to a wide range of qualifications:

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)

The NVQs constitute a set of City and Guilds (C&Gs) most popular qualifications and are usually completed in the workplace. One of the benefits of a NVQ is that guarantees the ability to actually do the job, which makes it suitable to take while at work. A key part of the course includes proving that one can do certain work-related tasks. During the course, one will be assessed through his/her portfolio, where one builds evidence of the work one had done already, and by observation, where an assessor watches one's work and checks that he or she can perform the necessary tasks. This shows that having an NVQ on one's CV is a great way to prove that one has the work-related skills needed for the job.

International Vocational Qualifications (IVQs)

These sets of International Vocational Qualifications (IVQs) are designed to measure the knowledge and practical skills of learners and are designed specifically for the international market place. There are two types, Craft and Technician, and they are available at three levels, Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma. They are recognised by employers all over the world, so, holders can take the qualifications along with them whenever they travel.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

The SVQs are the Scottish equivalent of the NVQs, and offered by training providers, colleges and some schools. The SVQs are available for nearly all occupations and participants include apprentices, new staff members, experienced people who do not have formal

qualification and individuals who desire a qualification with practical and vocational skills.

Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs)
The VRQs offer pathways and levels which focus on the development of the underlying principals and practical skills required in varying industries. They are designed to deliver a high level of occupational capability, and a sound platform to progress into employment. The flexible structures ensure they will appeal to individuals in full time or part time education, as well as continuous professional development.

Awards, Certificates and Diplomas
These qualifications are usually completed in the classroom or workshop, although some are workplace-based. They are available at all levels and across all subjects. Awards are the smallest and require the least time to complete, certificates are larger and diplomas are the largest and usually contain a lot more units.

Core Skills and Essential Skills
These are available in Scotland (Core Skills) and Wales (Essential Skills) and can be adapted for Nigeria by the government. They cover the key areas of communication, numeracy, information and communication technology, problem solving and working with others, which are required in almost every workplace.

Functional Skills
Functional Skills are qualifications in English, Mathematics and ICT that support the candidate to develop the practical skills needed for life, education and the workplace.

Single Subject Qualifications
These are short course, single subject qualifications that cover all the key skills that both employers and employees need in the modern office. A Diploma can be awarded when a combination of subjects has been achieved. The Diplomas are in Business Skills and Finance and Accounting. They are recognised by employers all over the world, so holders can take them along wherever they travel to.

Apprenticeships and Modern Apprenticeships
Apprenticeships are a great way to earn while one learns, and prepare oneself for a brilliant career. Each apprenticeship is a mix of qualifications and on-the- job experience. They are available across a wide range of industries - just like C&G qualifications.

International English Qualifications
C&Gs International English Qualifications (IEQs) are a comprehensive range of quality English language awards designed for those who need a passport to work, study and travel around the globe. They are recognised by employers, educational institutions and professional bodies worldwide.

Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM) Qualifications
The ILM is the professional membership arm of the City & Guilds group, dedicated to equipping the holder with all the leadership and management techniques and teaching to help him or her get ahead. ILM qualifications are recognised all over the world as the sign of a motivated and skilled leader or manager.

Professional Recognition Awards
If someone has scaled the heights in his/her career and wants something to prove it, then City & Guilds' Professional Recognition Awards are just the thing. These unique qualifications recognise your professional experience and skills, and show employers that you really are among the best in your business.

TechBac
City & Guilds is redeveloping its TechBac in line with recently suggested changes to the current curriculum by the Government and the Labour Party of the UK. The new TechBac will provide young people with a basis for future development, whether they want to move onto an apprenticeship, the university or to employment. This is going to be a good model for Nigeria if the search for skilful middle level manpower that used to be will be brought back fully equipped.

Table 1: Number of Innovation Enterprise Institutions/Vocational Enterprise Institutions Offering TVE Programmes by State in 2018.

S/N	State	Capital	Number of IEIs/VEIs	Number of Institutions Offering NIDs Programmes	Number of Institutions Offering NVCs Programmes
1	Abia	Umuahia	1	1	Nil
2	Adamawa	Yola	Nil	Nil	Nil
3	Akwa Ibom	Uyo	6	6	2
4	Anambra	Awka	4	4	2
5	Bauchi	Bauchi	Nil	Nil	Nil
6	Bayelsa	Yenegoa	4	3	1
7	Benue	Makurdi	1	Nil	1
8	Borno	Maiduguri	Nil	Nil	Nil
9	Cross River	Calabar	1	1	Nil
10	Delta	Asaba	4	4	3
11	Ebonyi	Abakaliki	2	2	1
12	Edo	Benin city	6	6	4
13	Ekiti	Ado-ekiti	2	1	1
14	Enugu	Enugu	6	5	5
15	Gombe	Gombe	Nil	Nil	Nil
16	Imo	Owerri	3	3	2
17	Jigawa	Dutse	1	Nil	1
18	Kaduna	Kaduna	11	8	4
19	Kano	Kano	5	3	1
20	Katsina	Katsina	4	4	2
21	Kebbi	Birmi-kebbi	Nil	Nil	Nil
22	Kogi	Lokoja	1	1	Nil
23	Kwara	Ilorin	2	2	1
24	Lagos	Ikeja	32	26	10
25	Nasarawa	Lafia	3	3	Nil
26	Niger	Minna	Nil	Nil	Nil
27	Ogun	Abeokuta	10	10	6
28	Ondo	Akure	1	1	Nil
29	Osun	Oshogbo	2	2	1
30	Oyo	Ibadan	10	10	2

31	Plateau	Jos	4	4	1
32	Rivers	Port-Harcourt	8	5	4
33	Sokoto	Sokoto	Nil	Nil	Nil
34	Taraba	Jalingo	Nil	Nil	Nil
35	Yobe	Damaturu	Nil	Nil	Nil
36	Zamfara	Guasau	Nil	Nil	Nil
37	FCT	Abuja	13	9	7
Total			**147**	**124**	**147**

Source: National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) 2018

In Nigeria, the VEIs runs either one or both of the Innovative Enterprise (IEIs) and Vocational Enterprise (VEIs) Institutions. The IEIs admit candidates who have passed five Ordinary Level (WAEC/NECO) subjects at credit levels for the National Innovation Diploma (NID), while the VEIs admit candidates with minimum of the Basic Education Certificate for the National Vocational Certificate (NVCs) programmes. The NID programme has accredited curriculum that runs for two years of fulltime or three to four years of part-time academic and practical modules. The NVCs programmes are held in parts: Part 1, Part 2 and Advanced. It is not good enough that despite the nation's pledge to grow in science and technology, the private sector has once again stolen the show by establishing all the VEIs listed (Table 1), though government registered, but not one is government owned.

RQ. 3. How will the community intervene in the provision of TVE Programmes?

Curriculum Reform: There should be a curricula reform to take care of what the schools should teach and what the students should learn. Teaching and learning must be based on:

a. The changing needs of the child;
b. The changing needs of the school, system;
c. The changing needs of the society vis-a-vis its geography, history and culture.

1. Let the Child Evolve. Teaching and learning must help the child to emerge. Education is to help the child to discover his

potentials and help him to develop them. Then he can contribute positively to the development of his environment.

2. Upgrading of Literacy Baseline: The society must graduate from the basic grammar school curriculum to a well censored cyber-based hands-on, peer reviewed curricular package to impact the life of the 21st century learner / youth. Building of e-classrooms and laboratories and even libraries is highly commendable.
3. Training and re-training programmes are critical. Now we need interactive boards, technology-driven curriculum and IT experts to impress the 21st century learner.
4. Peer tutoring is a further step to take by the school and the community. The time now is ripe for critical pedagogy to reflect unprecedented global changes. Let the child own the process (problem- based learning). Get youths involved in projects, field trips, group around table discussions of interesting issues, discussions with authority figures and elderly persons to share academic and practical life experiences.
5. Inclusive education: Nigeria must appreciate the benefit of inclusion in the grouping of learners into school classes and programmes. We should enter into the era of mainstreaming instead of the prevailing special streaming approach. Specially-challenged learners regardless of gender at all levels can learn together in the same school environment for this is really what obtains in the community out there!
6. Access and scholarships: Government must reconsider scholarship offers and bursary awards to salvage the fate of the indigent but talented learner in technical and vocational institutions.
7. Sensitisation and Re-direction: Parents who tend to demean technical and vocational education should be sensitised and re-directed to the virtues of this type of education so as to avoid associated with substandard dirty training for the lower-class dropout category. They should assist the school system to achieve the objectives of technical/vocational education for the gifted, if not all children.
8. Monitoring and Evaluation: Non-Governmental Organisations have a role to play by monitoring and evaluating the

educational programmes of government, individual investors and offering assistance in cash and kind as the times demand. Also, international agencies can be approached to contribute their own quota towards making post-secondary level education take a more functional shape.

Hindrances to Realising the Benefits of Technical Vocational Education in Nigeria

If Nigeria must become one of the top 20 economies in the world as espoused in the popular **Vision 20-2020**, we suggest that the following problems must be tackled:

1. Negative attitude to technical education in contrast to regular academic degrees must be corrected. The *NPE* (S.6, Ss.47) decried Nigerians' disregard for technical education which at the moment is somewhat considered as inferior to other types of education.
2. Leadership ineptitude: Ojo (2011) finds out that Nigerian leaders have failed to give technical education the needed attention leading to poor supply of skilled technical manpower and its socio-economic injury to national development.
3. Inadequate funding: Unlike other levels, technical vocational education is more capital intensive in terms of facilities and equipment, instructors and teachers. Nigeria has never met UNESCO's 26% benchmark in education funding. For example, Nigeria spends 1% of her GDP and 5.8% of her total public expenditure on education; Lesotho spends 7.8% of her GDP and 17.5% of her total public expenditure on education; Liberia spends 6.5% of her GDP and 14.2% of her total public expenditure on education.
4. Inadequate supply of teaching/learning materials. Olaitan (1996) reveals that our schools are overcrowded, laboratories, workshop facilities and output are deteriorating, consumables are depleting, library books are obsolete leading to poor quality of input, process.
5. Inadequate thrust on technically skilled manpower development: There are few universities in Nigeria that offer courses in technical vocational education. Nigeria has not invested seriously in training and re-training of her technical

manpower to keep pace with technological dynamics in today's world.

6. Economic misfortune and collapse of industries: Many manufacturing industries have relocated to Ghana and South Africa where power supply is considered stable enough. Many industries have also closed doors to production for varying reasons. Examples are our Iron and Steel Industries in Aladja and Benin and our Petroleum Refineries, among many others. The simple meaning is that employment opportunities are closed in these and other places. How can development come from stunted growth?
7. Curricula Deficiencies (Uwaifo, 2009 in Oyebade, 2013b): Most aspects of the curricula operated in vocational technical schools have been adjudged to be too academic and overloaded with intellectual content in pure science and mathematics at the expense of basic engineering and technology.

Need for Action Plan

The need is very urgent to steer away the ship of the educational system in Nigeria from imminent collapse. Thus, the following steps should be considered to re- evaluate the system with a view to making it more effective and efficient for national development:

1. Bring back the Trade Centres: Years back, Nigeria had a referenced middle class made up of civil servants who had A/Level, G.III, G.II, G.I, NCE, OND certificates and who were able to survive in the economy until the Structural Adjustment Programme of government wiped out the middle class, leaving the abject and the super-rich. China in its evolution and revolution invested heavily in technical/vocational education brought her teeming youths of secondary school leavers into this functional capacity that still pays high for the nation to date.
2. Build up internal mechanism and give the youth life skills: We need to educate the three domains: the head, the heart and the hands. China, Singapore, South and Korea, Japan and Vietnam, India did it successfully.
3. Mind rebuilding: Youths need to be taken away from redundancy which precipitates violence and crime, poverty,

ignorance and diseases. They need to be pulled away from the brink of wastage and be pushed back to the classroom for functional education. Nigeria need to invest more in technical/vocational institutions. The system should be well equipped to meet the needs of the 21st century youth.

Suggestions and Interventions

1. Purposive interventions by all interested stakeholders, the receiving community and build functional workshops in urban and sub-urban communities in Nigeria.
2. Get the youths attracted to life skills acquisition programmes and fund the beneficiaries after training for take-off.
3. To teach participants, community-based experts in the specific trades should be invited to teach or demonstrate the practicality of what class instructors have taught in theory.
4. Training and re training opportunities for teachers and managers of the educational system.
5. Nigeria should ensure implementation of the 9-3-4 education system which is capable of achieving functional education if well implemented.
6. Government should bring back the City and Guilds (C&Gs) programme and let experts supervise the system. The C&Gs' programmes are loaded with rich courses like business skill, manufacturing industries, retail and ware housing, aviation, travel and tourism, oil and gas, etc.

Conclusion

Creating an awareness of the potential of technical/vocational curriculum for post-secondary level admission seekers is a critical and right step in the right direction. The training and qualification awarded to such people will catapult a revolution that will restore the middle-class group of citizens who are able to provide the middle level technical expertise needed for the economy to take off and propel into maturity.

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