

**EMPOWERING NIGERIAN YOUTHS THROUGH TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING (TVET) FOR ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY**

BY

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Abstract

Repositioning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for Empowering Nigeria Youth for enhancing National Security. This paper focused on repositioning Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Empowering Nigeria Youth for enhancing National Security. It examined briefly the concepts of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), it also initiated several youth empowerment programmes through TVET, but a lot of these programmes lack structure and their impact not tell by nation's youths. This is evident in the substantial number of youth that lack work skills were often results to unemployment, insecurity, loss of lives and properties and chaos. Descriptive survey research design was used and data was obtained using structural questionnaire. The total population for the study consists of all TVET lecturers in Post public secondary schools in South-Western Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Eight-Five respondents for the study. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by the TVET experts and reliability coefficient of 0,87 was established using Cronbach Alpha. Mean and standard were used to answer the research questions. Finding shows that TVET experts recommend that empowerment skill areas should focus on horticulture, business, engineering and construction. It was suggested among others, that the relevant arms of government should provide youths with requires vocational skills in areas such as horticulture, business, engineering and construction works.

Keywords: Empowerment skills, National Security, Nigeria Youths, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Introduction

Indeed, various contemporary definitions of the term “Technical, Vocational Education and Training” (TVET) are evolving to reflect the fundamental changes in the scope of the programmes worldwide. Most recently, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) defined (TVET) as a comprehensive term refers to those aspects of educational process involving, 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 in addition to general education. FRN (2013) listed the goals of (TVET) to include among others: provision of trained manpower in the areas of applied sciences, technology, business, advanced craft as well as providing training and related skills for self reliant and employment. Indeed, (TVET) is a potent means for fast-tracking technological progress, citizens’ capacities, economic growth and national development (Akhuemonkhan & Raimi, 2013). It is designed to train skilled and entrepreneurial workforces that are needed to create wealth that would help reduce the menace of poverty and unemployment (Maigida, 2014).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2009) viewed (TVET) as learning, aims at developing skills in the practice of certain trades, as well as learning, aims at preparing students for entry into the labour market in general. The organization 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 joining specific trades in view. The organisation 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.

According to UNESCO-UNEVOC (2006), (TVET) is classified into three categories: formal, non-formal and informal TVET. Formal TVET refers to organised vocational education programmes provided within an approved public or private educational or training institution and it is structured (in terms of curriculum, learning objectives and learning time) in such a way that it constitutes a continuous “ladder” where one level leads to the next and finally leads to certification. In a nutshell, formal TVET covers vocational education programmes provided within an approved public institution. It is intentional from the learner’s perspective, it is school based, it has a rigid curriculum, and the entry qualifications of trainees are fixed. Moreover, teachers in the formal TVET delivery system are required to be trained technical teachers with relevant vocational teachers’ qualifications. Non-formal TVET is the type of vocational education and training which takes place outside the formal school system either on a regular or intermittent basis. It has the advantage of a short-term training period; it is occupation-specific; the main emphasis is on the acquisition of practical skills for self-reliance or direct employment in a related field. For this reason, skilled craftsmen with some pedagogical training may be engaged as instructors. Informal TVET is the type of vocational education that is provided by craftsmen of different trades in the informal sector of the economy. It is more appropriately often referred to as vocational training or experience based learning and is usually carried out in form of apprenticeship system. Thus, the informal TVET is characterised by the non-existence of any curriculum or structure as there is no well-designed scheme and the method of training is not always sequential. The master craftsman decides out of his experience what the apprentice should learn.

National security is fraught with controversy in educational literature as the term is ambiguous and could be viewed from different perspectives such as political, legal, and military. The variety of definitions therefore, reflects the many usages of this concept. Wikipedia (2015b) defined national security as an appropriate and aggressive blend of political resilience and maturity, human resources, economic structure and capacity, technological competence, industrial base and availability of natural resources and finally the military might. It maintained that national security could equally refer to the measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well being of its people and its survival as a nation-state at any given time, by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance. Osakwe (2013) noted that some schools of thought emphasize on human security in the context of national security. He explained that it is the concept of human security that encompasses the protection of lives and property; a pre-condition for the improvement of people’s wellbeing; protection of human rights; and the provision of basic human needs. Akwara, et al (2013) noted that a broad understanding of what constitutes a national security in Nigeria includes disease, violent crime, political assassinations, kidnapping, ethno-religious conflicts, civil war, terrorism, and environmental degradation. Implicit in these definitions of national security is that when adequate security is provided for the citizens of any nation, a congenial environment for development and self-actualization is achieved.

Empowering young people according to Olabiyi (2013) is the process of encouraging them to be active citizens in their community. Youth mentoring can provide young people with positive role models, support and encouragement, and is thus considered one of the most effective ways of helping them reach their fullest potential as productive members of the society. TVET aims to promote the social inclusion of young people of diverse ethnic, religious, educational and socio-economic background with vocational

skills. This would help reduce unemployment among youths and as a result their energy, time and effort would be channelled into more productive means. Hence, youths will be better equipped for work and not be susceptible to socially degrading activities that could disrupt the peace and stability of the nation. TVET programmes offers training to people in areas including auto mechanics, building, metalwork, woodwork, plumbing and fitting, electrical work, business, home economics, agriculture among others. However, based on current needs of the nation, it is expedient that these youths are trained in specific areas that has been identified from market surveys, needs analysis and employers of labour as needed skill areas. This is necessary to maintain a balance in the spread of workers across all sectors of the economy and to reduce the duplication of skilled workers in already populated skill areas.

The objectives of empowering youths according to (Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Survey, 2009; 2010) are to: enable them to (1) develop good work ethics, (2) gain entrepreneurship experience, (3) attain employment readiness (4) develop skills and competencies that will enable them to make positive contribution to the development of their communities; (5) foster the development of behavioural change and (6) instill some level of responsibility and accountability in them; drawing on their creativity and energy to improve the delivery of public services; reduce youth unemployment and eradicate poverty among young people (Ministry of Sports and Youth Culture, 2009). Increasingly, with the conceptualisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the emphasis on poverty reduction that encompasses a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty, TVET has come to be seen as a tool for social inclusion, and for the integration of individuals into the labour market. TVET has assumed a much more credible position in the education spectrum as it addresses a number of social and economic problems that have been highlighted by the MDGs.

Ma'aji and Hassan (2012) as cited in (Nwankwo et al., 2013) reports that among the youth empowerment programs and poverty reduction programmes set up by the government since independence till date, there still exist a high rate of unemployment and poverty looming in the nation. Nwankwo et al. (2013) attributed this to the inappropriateness of these programmes, too much focus on already established skill areas, inconsistency in the running of the programmes, poor administration, poor and unsuitable programme content that is not consistent with employer's needs. These are responsible for the looming poverty and unemployment in the nation which results in youth engaging in numerous social vices that thus disrupts national peace and threatens national security. Therefore, the need for youth empowerment programs (YEPs) that would provide youths with adequate skills to be empowered is not only necessitated but also mandated.

YEPs, according to Nwankwo et al. (2013), are supposed to be within the reach of youths irrespective their social backgrounds and class. Morton and Montgomery (2013) also explains that YEPs are supposed to be highly participatory, youth-driven processes that help young people to strengthen positive attitudes, skills and behaviours that improves proper functioning across a range of life activities. Yet this is not the case with the YEPs and poverty reduction programmes set up in the nation. Various researchers have reported that many youths do not participate in these programmes due to the shallow means with which these programmes are being publicized (Nwankwo et al., 2013; Ohize & Adamu, 2009; Osuala, 2004). Furthermore, there also exists the issue of misappropriation of funds specifically disbursed for the sole purpose of implementing these programmes. Nwankwo et al. (2013) reports that this has led to ill-structured programmes with unsuitable content focusing on skill areas already vastly populated. Hence, resulting in the production of unskilled workers with little or no knowledge of the vocation they were trained for.

TVET is believed to prepare youths to develop profitable social habits required by the society (Olaitan, Nwachukwu, Igbo, Onyemachi, & Ekong, 1999). Research literature has also emphasized that it is rare to see those who are vocationally trained and gainfully employed become delinquents and anti-socials of the society (Ma'aji & Hassan, 2012; Nwankwo et al., 2013; Ohize & Adamu, 2009; UNESCO, 2004). To this

end, it becomes necessary to overhaul already established programmes to focus on skills and vocational areas that have not been fully explored in order to provide skills to youth across all sectors of the nation's economy. Furthermore, administrators of these programmes across federal, state and local government areas would need to develop working plans that draws from the results of research to appropriate funds disbursed for YEPs. Therefore, it is the goal of this study to specifically, seek experts views on aspects of TVET programs that YEPs can focus on to empower youths thereby promoting peace and national security. The study also addresses strategies and techniques that can be adapted by YEPs to empower youths.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria as a developing nation with rich intellectual and material resource should have attained a state where unemployment, crime rate, violence, and numerous social vices are at a minimum. Unfortunately this is not the case with Africa's largest economy, as reports shows large proportions of youths are unemployed and unskilled. As a result these youths engage in socially degrading activities that disrupts the nation's peace and threatens her national security. In an attempt to curb the excesses of social violence and crime resulting from unemployed and unskilled youths in the country, the government through its various institutions had set up various youth empowerment programmes to empower youths with various vocational skills. However, despite the government's effort to solve this problem, unemployment and poverty still looms in the country (Atsumbe, Emmanuel, Igwe, & Atsumbe, 2012; Ma'aji & Hassan, 2012; Ohize & Adamu, 2009). Nwankwo et al. (2013) and Atsumbe et al. (2012) asserts that this is as a result of the inappropriateness of these programmes, duplication of already populated skill areas, inconsistency in the running of the programmes, poor administration and unsuitable programme content that is not consistent with market needs. Therefore the goal of this study was to identify specific vocational skill areas consistent with market needs where youths can be adequately trained to gain employment or create one. Also the study identifies some techniques and strategies that can be utilized to empower youths, thereby promoting peace, stability and national security.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify vocational skill areas with which youths can be empowered for the enhancement of peace and national security.

Specifically, the study sought to determine the:

- (i) techniques and strategies that can be adopted for empowering youths to promote peace and national security?
- (ii) empowerment skills required by youths through TVET for national security?

Research Questions

In line with the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formulated for the study.

1. What are the techniques and strategies that can be adopted for empowering youths to promote peace and national security?
2. What are the empowerment skills required by youths through TVET for national security?

Methodology

The design of the study was a descriptive survey research. There exist a need to determine the empowerment skill areas needed to empower youths in an attempt to promote peace and national security in Nigeria. Hence, the researchers sought the expertise of eighty five TVET lecturers purposefully selected from ten south-western states in Nigeria for the study. The population for the study was defined as TVET lecturers in public post-secondary vocational institutions in South-Western Nigeria. To ensure that a representative sample was selected from the population, the researchers defined specific selection criteria used in selecting participants for the study. TVET lecturers with a minimum of seven years teaching and research experience, and a significant contribution to issues in TVET were considered the base selection criteria for participants for the study. Hence, a total of hundred and twenty lecturers were first listed as potential participants for the study having met the base selection criteria. After several

considerations and review the list was reduced to a total of eighty five participants selected. Participants were purposefully selected to ensure that only those with adequate knowledge of TVET related issues were chosen, and also to ensure that quality data was generated.

Data for the study were collected with a questionnaire. The questionnaire utilized for the study was a researcher developed questionnaire known as the Empowerment Skill Inventory Checklist (ESIC). The ESIC is a structured questionnaire that consists of three sections, A, B and C. Section A sought personal information from respondents which included; institution name, position, gender, qualification, teaching and research experience. Section B contained 11 items specifically aimed at determining the empowerment skills required by youths. While section C contained 15 items aimed at determining strategies and techniques that can be adopted in empowering youths to promote peace and national security. The ESIC was structured on a five point Likert scale and was subjected to face and content validity by three TVET experts at the department of Science and Technology Education, University of Lagos. Expert's suggestions and recommendations were duly incorporated into the final draft of the ESIC. The Cronbach's Alpha value obtained for the ESIC was .87.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Raw data was first coded and fed into the SPSS program and mean and standard deviation were specifically used to analyse the data. The cut-off point set for accepting or rejecting an item was set at 3.5. Hence, items with mean values of 3.5 and above were accepted while items below 3.5 were also rejected. Out of a total of 85 questionnaires that were packaged and distributed, only 70 of them were retrieved, making up a total of 82.4% retrieval rate.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Techniques and strategies for Empowering Youths

S/No	Techniques and strategies for Empowering Youths	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Establish computer literacy programmes to empower youths with basic IT Skills	4.31	0.49	Agreed
2	Standardize all certificates and diplomas from training colleges to allow graduates gain employment	4.31	0.49	Agreed
3	Create business awareness through entrepreneurship programmes.	4.65	0.56	Agreed
4	Establish more vocational colleges to accommodate more youths simultaneously into programmes.	4.32	0.98	Agreed
5	Utilize distance learning programmes to cater for youths outside the reach of vocational colleges.	4.40	0.81	Agreed
6	Sponsor young graduates for postgraduate programme in research in strategic disciplines of economic demand.	4.48	0.85	Agreed
7	Vocational college administrators must ensure that programmes offered are structured in line with allocated budgets to ensure continuance.	4.72	0.48	Agreed
8	Promote healthy collaboration between vocational schools and industries to provide adequate vocational training for youths.	4.66	0.48	Agreed
9	Conduct public education campaigns and activities to educate and inform youths about opportunities for vocational training.	4.53	0.53	Agreed
10	Institute a vocational training policy which addresses issues such as the transition from general to vocational education	4.21	1.01	Agreed
11	Qualified instructors and trainers (sector-specific and teaching qualifications) should be recruited	4.37	0.57	Agreed
12	Administrators with vast experience and knowledge of vocational	4.30	0.92	Agreed

education should be selected to administer vocational colleges

13	Training contents should be aligned with market needs and incorporate more practical experience	4.30	0.62	Agreed
14	Instructional methods which challenge learners to be motivated and solve problems should be utilized.	4.65	0,48	Agreed
15	Utilize apprenticeship training to prepare youths to develop and master work skills.	4.07	1.15	Agreed

Table 1 shows respondents rating of the techniques and strategies that can be adopted to empower youths to promote peace and national security. All items had mean values ranging from 4.05 to 4.72 respectively; hence the items were remarked as agreed, since each mean value exceeded the cut-of value of 3.50. Findings revealed that respondents agree to all the techniques and strategies suggested by the researchers on empowering youths for peace and national security.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on Empowerment Skills Required by Youths for National Security

S/No	Empowerment Skills Required for National Security	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Vocational skills in areas such as horticulture, business, engineering and construction works,	4.33	0.96	Agreed
2	Develop in youths character and general discipline of work environment	4.20	0.63	Agreed
3	Develop business skills in order to start up viable businesses.	4.06	0.69	Agreed
4	Develop in youths financial planning skills to enable the sustainability of their enterprises.	4.30	0.62	Agreed
5	Develop appropriate skills that commensurate with changing demands of the labour market.	4.30	0.91	Agreed
6	Instil in young people the attitude of participating in the national economy through small businesses.	4.33	0.91	Agreed
7	Sponsor young graduates for postgraduate programme and research in some strategic disciplines of economic demand	4.11	0.79	Agreed
8	Develop in youths the techniques of maintaining customer relations.	4.04	1.07	Agreed
9	Develop basic computation skills	4.43	0.50	Agreed
10	Develop appropriate communication skills to meet clients and customer's expectations	4.14	0.59	Agreed
11	Develop the skill of adaptation in a changing business environment.	4.01	1.12	Agreed

Table 2 shows the responses of TVET experts (lecturers) on the empowerment skills required by Nigerian youths in order to promote peace and national security. Respondents agreed to all items as shown in Table. Items had mean values ranging from 4.01 to 4.43 respectively. Findings revealed that youth

empowerment skills should focus on horticulture, business, engineering and construction, financial planning skills, basic computation skills, communication skills as well as adaptation skills necessary for youths to cope with the ever changing business and work environment.

Discussion of Findings

The study sought to identify empowerment skills required by youths in order to promote peace and national security, as well as determined some techniques and strategies that could be adopted in empowering youths. Based on the data collected and analysed, findings indicate that TVET experts recommend that empowerment skill areas should focus on horticulture, business, engineering and construction. Furthermore, respondents agree that specific skills which includes, business planning skills, financial management skills, computation skills, communication skills, customer relation skills and adaption skills should be the focus of youth empowerment training programmes. The emphasis that it is rare to see those who are vocationally trained and gainfully employed become delinquents and anti-socials of the society perhaps brings justification to the need for empowering youths with vocational skills. Okorie (2001) reported that TVET has a good potential of creating jobs for the unemployed graduates, and reducing poverty level in the society. Hence, a focus on horticulture, business, engineering and construction is thus a necessary way of creating jobs and empowering unemployed youths. To elucidate this, (Shields & Willits, 2003) in a survey carried out to determine the growing importance of horticulture in the agricultural economy of the north-eastern United States, reports that the sector generates an estimated \$3.3 billion and creates over 107,000 jobs. This goes a long way in exposing the need for this skill area to be vastly developed especially in the African economy. Business, engineering and construction are complimentary skill areas which should not be left unattended to. Therefore, youth empowerment programmes aimed at preparing youths for work should focus on training youths specifically more on these identified skill areas.

Findings from the study also revealed some techniques and strategies that can be adopted in empowering youths for national security. Respondents agree that some of these strategies and techniques should include; utilising apprenticeship training to prepare youths to develop and master work skills, establish computer literacy programme to empower youths with basic IT Skills; standardize certificates and diplomas from training institutes to enable youths gain employment, create business awareness through entrepreneurship programmes, utilise distance learning programmes to train youths outside the reach of vocational colleges, develop in youths the required vocational skills needed to create and sustain viable enterprises and so on. The findings are congruent with the reports of the (Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Survey, 2009; 2010) which emphasized that youths can be empowered through the following programmes: Life skills and capacity building programme, youth entrepreneurship programme; attachment to public programmes; attachment to mega projects; and basic computer literacy training programme. MacFarlane and Khong (2006) and Paleri (2008) also asserted that the provision of jobs also makes it possible for a country to be well secured economically, they emphasised that third world countries are less secured due to the lack of employment for its citizens. Therefore, in order for developing nations like Nigeria to become economically stable, without the incessant disruption of its peace and national security, necessary action must be taken to integrate these strategies and techniques into its existing system to bring about the desired change Nigeria seeks.

Furthermore, findings on the strategies that can be adopted to empowering youths also revealed approaches such as; conducting public education campaigns and activities to educate and inform youths about the opportunities of vocationally inclined youth empowerment programmes- Youth empowerment programmes however carefully planned and structured, would be deemed irrelevant if it fails to address the sole purpose for which it was established, therefore adequate measures should be taken to ensure that opportunities for empowerment programmes are well communicated to youths. Administrators with vast experience and knowledge of vocational education should be selected to administer vocational colleges- this is necessary to curb issues of losses and waste that leads to the non-implementation of established

training programmes the way they were originally planned and conceptualized. Also, qualified instructors and trainers (sector-specific with adequate experience and teaching qualifications) should be recruited to ensure that up-to-date content is taught to trainees who participate in these empowerment programmes.

Conclusion

The study sought to determine empowerment skills required by Nigerian youths through TVET for enhancing national security. The results of the study revealed that empowerment skills programmes should specifically focus on skill areas such as horticulture, business, engineering and construction. Developing skills in these areas are very essential for youths as it enables them to be gainfully employed and productive, enabling them to become responsible citizens, thereby promoting peace and national security. The study also highlighted some techniques and strategies that can be adopted for empowering youths. It is believed that if these techniques and strategies are duly adopted, it would ensure peaceful coexistence among people living in societies and equip youths with adequate and up-to-date skills of their chosen vocation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study;

- (i) TVET administrators should develop vocational skills in areas such as horticulture, business, engineering and construction works that will develop in youth character and general discipline of a work environment towards national security.
- (ii) Administrators in TVET programmes should utilize apprenticeship training to prepare youths to develop profitable social habits required by the society and basic computer literacy training programme to empower youths with IT skills.
- (iii) The Ministry of Education through NBTE and its respective agencies charged with the responsibility of empowering youths through vocational training should conduct public education campaigns and activities to sensitize, educate and inform youths in various communities about the significance of TVET programmes.
- (iv) Efforts should be made to strengthen the collaboration between industries, vocational institutions and TVET providers so as to enable that relevant content that meets labour needs are taught to participants of various vocational training programmes.
- (v) Government through technical education boards should offer counselling, mentorship and teach youths to develop financial planning skills, business skills, communication skills, customer relation skills as well as basic computation skills needed to enable them start viable and sustainable enterprises.

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