



FOSTERING NATIONAL SECURITY THROUGH QUALITY TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in fostering national development cannot be overemphasized. In many developing nations, Nigeria inclusive, the need for skilled workforce is paramount for driving economic growth and ensuring national security. This paper explores the nexus between quality TVET and national development, stressing its potential to transform economies and strengthen security frameworks. The paper also examines strategies for promoting national security through TVET. These include blending TVET with national security policies, strengthening Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in TVET and expanding access to TVET in rural and marginalized areas. In a similar vein, the paper also pointed-out key barriers to effective TVET policies implementation in Nigeria, including under-estimation of practical teaching, weakness of teachers' force in practical teaching, corruption among others. By equipping individuals with practical skills and competencies, TVET programmes enable the workforce to adapt to technological advancements and meet the demands of various industries, thereby reducing unemployment and underemployment. Furthermore, the paper discusses the security implications of unemployment and unskilled labour, arguing that quality TVET can ameliorate these risks by providing youth with viable alternatives through job creation. The integration of entrepreneurship education within the trade areas of TVET is also adjudged as one of the strategies for enhancing self-reliance and economic independence among youth. The paper concludes by campaigning for increased investment in TVET infrastructure, curriculum refinement, and teacher training as essential components for enhancing the quality of TVET programmes. The paper recommended among others that; the policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders should collaborate in strengthening TVET systems to realize the goals of national security and economic growth, thereby contributing to the overall national development.

Keywords: TVET, National security & National development

Introduction

In the world over, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is increasingly recognized as a critical driver of economic growth and national security. TVET however, is a form of education that adequately prepared individuals in skills, techniques, knowledge and attitudes for effective employment in the world of work. According to Okebukola (2023), TVET encompasses training programmes designed to align educational outcomes with industry requirements, aimed at bridging the skills gap by offering specialized training that meets the evolving demands of the Nigerian labour market, thereby enhancing employment prospects and supporting economic growth. TVET promotes skill acquisition, productivity for self – reliance through job creation as well as a veritable platform for individuals to excel in order to mitigate or curb the hazardous risks of insecurity caused by unemployment or under-employment.

Security had taking a center stage in the public discuss both locally and international. Security implies the protection of individuals, organizations, and nations from threats and risks that could cause harm or disruption (Brown & Smith, 2024). Nigeria, no doubt had witnessed a host of security challenges in different dimensions, ranging from the activities of herdsmen, boko - haram insurgencies, armed robber attacks, kidnapping for ransom, banditry, and a host of other crimes. Since no meaningful development can take place in an unsecure environment; hence, security is crucial to sustainable development. Akinyemi, (2023) submitted that TVET programmes serve as a preventive measure against insecurity by fostering economic inclusion and social cohesion. Evidences from literatures revealed that breakdown of security is being perpetrated by youth, so, TVET can provide them (youth) with the skills, techniques, knowledge and attitude needed for effective employment in the world of work. When people are gainfully employed, their standards of living will be improved; the rate of insecurity will reduce, the overall country’s economy will be enhanced. All these are the indices of national development.

National development refers to the process through which a country improves its economic, social, and political well-being to enhance the quality of life for its citizens. UNDP, (2023) described national development is a multifaceted concept referring to the process of improving the economic and social well-being of a country's population. This involves advancing infrastructure, education, healthcare, and governance to achieve sustainable growth, social equity, and overall progress in society. Akinbode, (2022) stressed that effective TVET frameworks support national development through improved workforce competencies, that are essential for industrialization and technological advancement. Therefore, integrating TVET into national development strategies strengthen security by reducing unemployment and social

unrest. By equipping individuals with relevant skills, TVET supports economic stability and social cohesion thus, creating a safer and more prosperous nation.

Clarification of Concepts

National Security

Locally and internationally, security situation has assumed a worrisome trend. Security, according to Adeyemi and Bello (2024) refers to the measures and strategies implemented to protect individuals, communities, and national assets from threats such as terrorism, crime, and civil unrest. Security is therefore perceived as a situation in which citizens are free from any threats to their life and means of livelihood, free from bodily harm, diseases, unemployment, and human rights violations wherever they may find themselves within a sovereign nation. National security involves safeguarding a nation's sovereignty and maintaining the well-being of its people through multi-faceted approaches that address both traditional and non-traditional threats (Nye, 2022). Gubak and Bulus (2018) maintained that security is related to the presence of peace, safety, happiness and the protection of lives and property or the absence of crisis, threats to human survival, among others. Security is one of the important indicators for national coexistence and national survival hence, the need for TVET that encourages skill acquisition for productivity and self-reliance. When people are gainfully employed, their standards of living will improve, the rate of insecurity will reduce, and the overall country's economy will be enhanced.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) encompass a range of learning experiences that prepare individuals for employment in specific trades or occupations. According to UNESCO-UNIVOC (2023) TVET refers to education and training programmes that provide learners with the practical skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for employment in specific occupations or industries. The main thrust of TVET is to equip individuals with the competencies required for employment, entrepreneurship, and further learning. TVET programmes often integrate classroom instruction with hands-on experience; preparing learners for the demands of the workforce. The holistic approach of this programme ensures that graduates are not only equipped with technical skills but also possess problem-solving abilities and adaptability necessary for success in diverse work environments.

However, the objectives of TVET as enshrined in the revised National Policy on Education (2014) are to:

- a. provide trained man power in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional grades.

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- b. provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, industrial, commercial and economic development.
- c. provide people who can applied scientific knowledge to the improvement of, and solution to environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
- d. give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant.
- e. enable our youngmen and women to have an intelligent undrestanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

A careful look at the objectives of TVET enunciated above revealed that the programme is based on productivity by equipping an individual with essential skills for survival in the world of work. However, Since, a country's education depends on the needs and aspiration of the country, therefore, there should be a paradigm shift in TVET curriculum from a provider-driven training model, where students receive training without the assurance that the training is aligned to an identified need in the labour market, to a demand – driven training model whereby the curriculum is designed to address a gap observed in the labour market. With this, graduates can be equipped with entrepreneurial skills from the various trade areas available in TVET and hence become competent job – creators rather than job – seekers after graduation. This will eventually assist in improving graduates' standard of living or the condition of living of their dependents, alleviate poverty, improves the security of lives and property and also contribute to national development.

National Development

National development is a very controversial concept that had suffered definition pluralism. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2021) national development implies to the sustained, concerted actions of policy – makers and communities that promote the standard of living and economic health of a specific area with the ultimate goal of improving the overall quality of life of its residents. Lasisi, *et al.* (2022) opined that national development is any positive change which brings about desirable benefits to the individual and society. Perhaps, at the individual level, development may means growth in knowledge, skills, attitudes and enhanced ability to survive. At the society level, development is associated with modernization, material advancement, industrialization, scientific and industrial progress, new knowledge about man and the universal improvement in standard of living, decrease in loss of lives and social security management towards racial, tribal and gender equality, decrease in unemployment and availability of job opportunities. Therefore, to enhance national development, career opportunities in TVET has enormous potentials for job creation, improving quality of life, reduce poverty and limiting the incidence of security challenges due to joblessness.

Strategies for fostering Security through TVET for National Development.

Security is everybody's business; no meaningful development can thrive in an insecure environment. Hence, promoting security through TVET is crucial for national development. By equipping individuals with hand-on skills, TVET has the potential of promoting economic growth, reduces unemployment, and mitigates crime, and thus enhances national development. Some of the initiatives for enhancing security through TVET include;

- a. **Blending TVET with National Security Policies:** One of the potent techniques of promoting security through TVET is alignment of TVET programmes with national security policies. Adewole (2023) observed that aligning TVET with national security objectives will in addition to requisite workplace competencies enlighten the learners with essential skills needed to responding to security challenges. This involves designing curricula that address the competencies needed to support critical infrastructure, cyber security, and emergency response.
- b. **Community-Based TVET Programmes for Social Cohesion:** Implementing community-based TVET programmes is another strategy for fostering security and national development. Okorie and Umezina (2023) noted that community-based TVET frameworks can be particularly effective in conflict-prone regions by engaging local populations in development projects and creating employment opportunities that enhance social stability.
- c. **Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in TVET:** Fostering collaborations between the community, government, industry, and educational institutions is one of mediums of reinforcing public-private partnerships (PPPs). In achieving this, the TVET programmes should be designed to reflect the current and future needs of the labour market, which helps in creating a skilled workforce that supports economic stability and reduces security risks. Eze and Okafor (2023) observed that PPPs can provide the necessary resources, infrastructure, and expertise to improve the quality and relevance of TVET programmes, thereby contributing to both economic development and national security.
- d. **Promoting Entrepreneurship and Economic Stability through TVET:** TVET programmes that emphasize entrepreneurship and self-employment can significantly contribute to national security by reducing unemployment and poverty, which are often the causative factors to social unrest. Nwankwo and Akintoye (2022) commented that strengthening entrepreneurship through TVET can mitigate security threats by providing young people with viable means of livelihood instead of engaging in crime.
- e. **Expanding TVET Access in Rural and Marginalized Areas:** Most a times, civil unrest is linked to marginalization in terms of social amenities, such as access to education. Targeted efforts should be made to improve TVET opportunity in the sub-

urban in order to reduce migration pressures on urban centers, and mitigate the risk of violence and crime (Olowu & Adedoyin 2023).

- f. **Incorporating Life Skills and Civic Education in TVET:** In addition to requisite competencies, there is need for integration of life skills and civic education in TVET curriculum so as to build ethical behavior and conflicts resolution skills among learners. Akinyemi (2023) stressed that teaching life skills alongside technical skills helps develop well-rounded individuals who are not only technically proficient but also socially responsible and capable of contributing to national cohesion and stability.

Therefore, fostering security through TVET for national development requires a comprehensive approach that emphasizes skill acquisition, integrating TVET programmes with security policies, strengthening public-private partnerships in TVET, promoting entrepreneurship and economic stability through TVET, among others. By equipping individuals with relevant workplace skills, TVET can reduce unemployment, enhance social stability, and contribute significantly to national security and national development.

Barriers of TVET Policy Implementation in Nigeria

Despite the significant role of TVET in the areas of human resource development for productivity in Nigeria, little progress had been made due to a number of problems which have continued to bedeviling the programme. Uwaifo (2015) identified the following among others as some of the challenges of TVET policy implementation in Nigeria. These challenges are as follows:

- i. **Under-estimation of practical teaching:** TVET is targeted at cultivating the habit of practical application of skills by students towards enhancing creativity and practical capacity. TVET schools should place extra emphasis on basic competences and skills required for practice in TVET fields as their major focus, with the precondition that the students may grasp requisites basic theoretical knowledge and professional skills. However due to influence of traditional education for quite a long time, TVET schools still followed the traditional education mode which at times de-emphasizes experiment and practice. Furthermore, TVET schools even become general compression-type regular higher education where theory is overemphasized and practical training is downplayed. Hence, the students are fall-short of the practical skills and manipulative ability, which cannot satisfy the demand of TVET educational philosophy.
- ii. **Weakness of Teachers' Force in Practical Teaching:** The weakness of the teachers' force in practical teaching significantly impacts TVET. Practical teaching is the cornerstone of TVET, where students acquire hands-on skills essential for their future careers. When teachers lack proficiency in practical instruction, students may not receive adequate training or exposure to real-world scenarios, leading to a gap between

theoretical knowledge and practical application. This can hinder students' preparedness for the workforce, as employers often prioritize candidates with practical skills and experience. Addressing this weakness is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of TVET in meeting the evolving needs of industries and promoting economic growth.

- iii. **Financial constraints:** While general education programmes, for instance, humanity, may only require buildings for lecture halls, TVET programmes generally require in addition, the buildings and equipment for special laboratories and workshops. All these cost a large sum of money of which the Federal and State governments appear unable to meet adequately in view of other pressing national and economic priorities.
- iv. **Corruption:** This is also another factor confronting realization of TVET goals in Nigeria. High level of corruption in Nigeria has robbed the country of developing a vibrant economic base, in spite of her abundant natural resources, massive corruption is perpetuated in every sector and has permeated the entire social structure of Nigeria. Funds meant for development projects which could have generated employment have been misappropriated, diverted, or embezzled. According to Transparency International (2019) corrupt practices in the admission and certification processes erode the integrity of qualifications, making it difficult for graduates to gain trust from potential employers
- v. **Poor electricity supply:** Epileptic power generation and supply is another factor that hindered the implementation of TVET policy in Nigeria. Most schools find it difficult to conduct practical as most machines are electrically operated. Most companies and industries had folded up due to incessant power failure. Private firms that provide employment opportunities for Nigerians have gradually shifted their production-base to other West African countries. Many manufacturers are experiencing low turnover in their businesses as they have to contend with incessant power failure, thus having to rely on generating sets which have to be fueled at exorbitant costs. As a result, many indigenous workers are retrenched (Adegoke, 2015).

Conclusion

Promoting national security through quality TVET is pivotal for Nigeria's national development. By equipping individuals with essential competencies and aligning TVET programmes with national security policies, the nation can reduce unemployment, mitigate security risks, and promote economic stability. The integration of life skills, civic education, and a shift towards a demand-driven training model will further enhance the relevance and effectiveness of TVET. As a result, TVET will serve not only as a tool for workforce development but also as an essential strategy for achieving sustainable national security and national development.

Recommendations

In the light of the issues discussed in the paper, the following recommendations are drawn:

- a. TVET curricular should be aligned with national security objectives in order to enlighten the learners with essential skills needed in responding to security challenges.
- b. TVET programmes should be designed to reflect the current and future needs of the labour market, which helps in creating a skilled workforce that supports economic stability and reduces security risks.
- c. There should be a paradigm shift of our TVET curriculum from a provider – driven training model to demand - driven training model where the training provided by educational institutions is aligned to an identified gap in the labour market.
- d. Targeted efforts should be made to improve TVET opportunity in the sub-urban in order to reduce migration pressures on urban centers, and mitigate the risk of violence and crime
- e. There is need for integration of life skills and civic education in TVET curriculum so as to build ethical behavior and conflicts resolution skills among learners.

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