



Management

TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA: A VERITABLE TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Abstract

This study examined how technical vocational education and training (TVET) in the South-South Nigeria could serve as a tool for sustainable economic growth. Strategies for sustainable economic growth within the Niger Delta region and challenges of TVET in this region were discussed. This paper stressed the need for a proper conducive learning environment if TVET objectives will be achieved. From the study, it was found that in South-South region the TVET systems, their strategies and policies have not been aligned sufficiently with the regional economic needs and labour market demands. The study gathered that due to urgent needs for skilled manpower in this region, the State Governments and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) have established many skills acquisition centers that produce manpower for oil and gas industry amongst others. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made: industries must make TVET a stronger focus of their economic and human resources development; TVET should be remolded to enhance the demand of our industry; industries should be involved in all designs and implementation of TVET programmes, there should be a cooperation between tertiary institutions, Government and industry; finally the teachers and instructors should be given in-service training regularly.

Keywords: Sustainable Growth; Technical and Vocational Education; Economic Development; South- South Region; Regional Integration; Learning Environment.

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1. Introduction

Sustainable economic growth can be achieved through reliable technical vocational education and training programmes in addition to conducive learning environment (Nzeneri, 2008). That is

why Nigeria, through its development agenda, seeks to help each region in the country to achieve sustainable peace and tranquility which will promote economic progress, environmental and social development in their regions and in turn help to improve the living conditions of the dwellers. The principal objective of technical vocational education and training is to train youths and adults alike, preparing and making them ready for the labour market. With technical revolution and innovations in science and technology, labour market needs have considerably advanced. New challenges must be met in order to match the education proposed with vocational demands. In that regard, several countries are in the process of reforming their education system, with a view to training youths to meet national, regional or international market needs through technical and vocational education and training programmes.

Therefore, Dokubo (2010) states that the physical, social and psychological learning environments of technical and vocational education programmes are of enormous importance if such objective could realized. Hence, if the environments are conducive in nature, they will help to make a great impact in this regard by fostering human resource development in the South-South region, as well as labour mobility throughout the region. In addition to the above, vocational education programmes, especially those that focus on vocational skills acquisition, should have the objective of making people more self-reliant and skillful whether self-employed or employed by someone else at any time.

Consequently, Technical and Vocational Education and Trainig (TVET) has been included as an important element in international political agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDGs 4, 5 and are directly related to vocational education. The Education for All (EFA) goal is an important frame of reference for development policy and sustainable economic growth of our country. TVET modules also have the potential to tackle key issues such as core labour standards and occupational health and safety, which means that they play a significant role in the effort to build sustainable value chains in South-South region of Nigeria. Contributing on the same issue, the African Union, Second Decade of Education for Africa states that:

In this society of 21st Century which is dominated by information and communication technology, and where labour market demands are constantly changing, the provision of relevant TVET programmes to both boys and girls should be considered fundamental to the effort to promote sustainable development and attain MDG-1 – eradicating extreme poverty and hunger – in Africa. (pp .10 -15)

Consequently, economic development programmes will surely rely on a broad set of instruments to promote TVET. This can help address national and regional challenges of this country. Nevertheless, TVET strategies and policies have been developed at the national level, but, there have not been a sufficient alignment of vocational technical education systems with the increasing labour market needs in Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Therefore, structural reforms are needed to make it easier to access the TVET system through regional cooperation and to transfer within and from that system, to align TVET systems more with the labour market demands, and to make TVET system programmes more comparable in terms of uniform standards. Proper implementation of TVET will help to provide even more efficient and demand –oriented training to TVET personnel in various fields of endeavour as

well as increase in labour mobility in the South-South region of Nigeria, which will in turn promote our economic growth. Additionally, adequate and effective TVET programmes will assist the region in engaging more closely with the needs of the private sector when designing and implementing TVET programmes and curriculum in our tertiary institutions.

Dokubo (2015), opined that for economic development to be environmentally sound as possible, it is important to inculcate technical skills of vocational education to our adults and youths. Therefore, when people recognize that they have a prospect in their state or country, this will stimulate them to stay in that place in order to shape that expected future, if not they may move to other places for greener pasture.

2. The Concept of Technical and Vocational Education and Training

According to the definition by UNESCO and the International Labor Organization (ILO), TVET refers to “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 occupants in various sectors of economic and social life” (UNESCO and ILO, 2001).

From the foregoing, TVET refers to a variety of learning skills which are applicable to the world of work. The learning practices may occur in a diversity of learning environments, including educational institutions and occupational place.

TVET also refers to conscious involvement to bring about knowledge which would make people more industrious in designated areas of economic activity. This is the distinctive principle of TVET. However, TVET will also have other reasons which are not exclusive to TVET, and which also apply to other forms of education, for instance knowledge, skills, insights and mindsets are considered to be usually important for the learners, not only in chosen sections of economic activity. It is imperative that TVET be conducted according to general social norms so that people in general should be treated with respect and dignity by the institutions since these programmes are dispensed in public and private educational establishments, or other forms of formal or informal instruction aimed at granting all segments of the society access to life-long learning resource. Therefore, it is important to facilitate learning by establishing an atmosphere conducive to learning from the beginning of the training. This is done by developing a relationship that is based on the mutual respect with the trainees, accepting the trainees as peers and behaving towards them accordingly and setting realistic objectives for the training.

3. Challenges for TVET in South-South Region of Nigeria

In the past few years, the country has witnessed some forms of economic development on the whole, even if the pace of development has varied from region to another. Generally, there is a constantly growing need for skilled labour and this requires systematic labour training programmes in South-South region of Nigeria. Hence, Nigeria and her business communities must make TVET a stronger focus of their economic and human resources development for sustainable growth. Ezeji (2005) states that, TVET programmes are imperative if youth restiveness, militancy, kidnapping and other social vices are to be reduced to the barest minimum

level. Consequently, due to youth restiveness and its associated social vices, our nation, states and her stakeholders have become much more aware of the economic importance of TVET as a veritable tool in ameliorating the incessant social vices arising perhaps due to unemployment and idleness of our employable youths. Consequently, if appropriate vocational education skills are inculcated into our unemployed youths, this will surely reduce the increasing rate of restiveness, militancy and other associated social vices we see today in South- South region of Nigeria. This is surely the ugly results and negative consequences of idleness and idle minds due poor management of our scarce resources and economy.

Even though TVET systems differ a great deal from one region to another, challenges in all the regions are similar when it comes to the quality of TVET programmes. In his own contribution, Omieibi-Davids (2006) opined that sometimes, school-based curriculum take very little, or no account of the world of work and usually do not give sufficient attention to needs of the industry. Young people who receive training that does not reflect the needs of the labour market will not find good and satisfactory jobs. This may lead to loss of interests in the vocation as well as low productivity. On the other hand, the firms cannot find adequate skilled workers they may need in order to meet the set objective of the firms.

In their own contributions, Anyomike, Okwelle and Okeke, (2015) indicate that there is a lack of systematic involvement of local, multi-national and regional industry operators in demand-based, practice-oriented programmes for technical and vocational education programmes. Their study also shows that Governments rarely carry out systematic surveys to find what the private sector needs, and usually their data on the labour market and the relevance of TVET system for industry are inadequate. There are only few instances in which some countries engage in systemic TVET research in order to take evidence based on political decisions (Dokubo and Dokubo 2016). Shehu (1998) shows that the incessant changes of the political system in our country, coupled with the resultant instability, inconsistency and incoherent modus operandi of our governmental programmes and policy make our educational research in TVET extremely difficult to achieve. These ugly trends negatively affect proper and effective implementation of technical and vocational education programmes in South-South region of Nigeria.

Generally, education is highly valued in Niger Delta region of Nigeria, nevertheless, another cog in the wheel of progress of TVET programmes, unlike academic education, is that vocational education is usually held in low regard. It is regarded as education for the less privileged people and never do wells. Most of our education policies focus on academic careers and do not give much attention to practice-oriented training for modern jobs. In many cases, TVET has a poor image, is not properly and separately integrated into the education system, and is severely poorly funded.

Akaninwor (2006) observes that some vocational teachers do not have appropriate training in vocational pedagogy or vocational-specific didactics. Most TVET teachers have academic degrees and no industry-based experiences whatsoever. Effective training is an important way of helping the trainees cope with changes. It provides them with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet employment requirements. The national directorate of employment (NDE 2005) shows that:

Effective training means working with trainees/students to help them learn and achieve their set goals. The instructors/trainers must assume equal responsibility (shared responsibility) along with the trainees for what is learned and how successfully the knowledge is applied on the job. The success of training is measured by the success of trainee in applying new information. The success of the trainees is the standard for judging the success of a trainer. An effective trainer must possess knowledge and skills as tool. He/she must have knowledge of the material to be taught, the learning characteristics of the trainees and how to accommodate those characteristics before learning can occur. An effective trainer must be skilled in presenting information, classroom interaction and accommodating the learning styles of the trainees (pp. 51- 52).

To make training effective, trainers must apply the skills and knowledge that they have acquired to facilitate the learning process for their trainees. So far, there are insufficient programmes for the systematic education or in-service retraining of TVET teachers.

From a regional perspective, the TVET systems of South-South region and their TVET strategies and policies have not yet been fully aligned sufficiently with the regional economic needs and labour market demands. Dokubo (2005) indicates that due to the urgent need for increase integration of these noble programmes of TVET in our region, many State Governments in Niger Delta region as well as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) have established many skills acquisition centres that produce manpower for oil and gas industry among others. This is because the Niger Delta region and institutions that are concerned with TVET do not yet have the quantitative or qualitative capacity to deal with the increasing labour market demand and supply that require needed and well-trained man power.

The serious economic and financial crisis that the region faces all the time is another challenge facing all of here. This has generated far-reaching changes in the production system and the labour market, and it has contributed to increasing graduates unemployment. In addition, the TVET systems found themselves unable to provide the needed skills required by the industry because of the increasing costs within the context of our economic recession. TVET systems suffer drastic budgetary reductions every year. Consequently, inadequate investments in TVET have contributed to its deterioration and hence, its effectiveness has reduced. Hence, Akaninwor (2012) categorically states that the system of dual (school-based and industry based) vocational education that is used in Germany is of a high –quality reference model for reforms in the sector of our economy. This system should be adopted in our region of South-South, Nigeria. The key characteristics of the dual system are: cooperation between the two sides of industry, industry federations and the government; specifically trained TVET teachers; and an established system of career guidance. Therefore, this cooperation has enabled TVET institutions in countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia to receive supports under German development cooperation and they enjoy great regional and international recognitions.

4. Strategies for Sustainable Economic Growth and Cooperation within the Niger Delta Region

Regional economic development cooperation programmes are characterized by mutual respect, trust and a sense of valuing each other. This is because no region in this country is an island of

its own and must depend on one another for social and economic development. Valuable inputs should be provided by numerous people who have already received supports in training of TVET programmes because they will be the ones that will circulate what they have learned.

The principal objective of TVET is to train youths and adults alike, readying them for the labour market. With technical revolution and innovations in science and technology, labour market needs have significantly evolved. New challenges must be met in order to match the educational system with vocational industrial demands with a view to training unemployed youths to meet national, regional or international market needs.

Hence, it is pertinent that adaptation of our vocational education systems should be compatible with the regional context and should be developed, designed and implemented with industry participation. These programmes should include the introduction of forms of education that are based on government-industry cooperation and the establishment of many vocational and technical training centres in South-South region of Nigeria. Such activities must include practice-oriented in-service training for teachers of TVET and industry instructors, advice on school management, the adaptation of existing training programs and the development of new training programs, and the modernization of equipment.

5. Conclusion

Strategies for vocational education systems that are compatible with the regional context should be developed and implemented with industry-participation. This should include the introduction of forms of education that are based on government-industry cooperation and the establishment of many vocational and technical training centres in South-South region of Nigeria. Such activities must include practice-oriented in-service training for teachers of TVET and industry instructors. Proper advice on TVET school management should be made available to educators and instructors in TVET programmes. The modification of existing training programmes and the development of new training programmes are imperative if the set objectives of TVET should be achieved. The modernization of existing equipment and teaching facilities are of immense importance. The importance of training TVET staff and working together with industry are highlighted in this study.

The programmes should be designed and planned to addresses the needs of the people as well as that of the industry. Education and in-service training for TVET staff in and outside the tertiary education sector should be promoted. Experts and executives from government departments, TVET institutions and industry federations and businesses should receive training on issues of regional relevance, enabling them to design, implement and evaluate training programmes that meet the regional and industry requirements.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) There should be dialogue meetings on policy and technical issues with a view to building a consensus ideas and preparing joint decisions of all the stake holders in TVET programmes.

- 2) There should a full support for replicable models of effective and relevant TVET programmes within the education system that will enhance the demand of our industry.
- 3) There is a need for the maximum industry involvement in all instruments and programme design and implementation.
- 4) Intensive capacity building, development and quality improvement efforts at the system, organization and individual levels, through longer-term formats such as scholarships and TEFUND training- sponsorships.
- 5) Creation of networks on policy and technical issues in order to facilitate communication and enhance joint and cooperative learning amongst the stakeholders in TVET programmes.
- 6) There should be a total reform in TVET policy so that the annual budgetary allocations to this sector of education will be increased.
- 7) The creation of a common market with increasing labor mobility is an important step with a view to the further integration of South- South region of Nigeria.
- 8) There should be a co-operation between tertiary institutions, Government and industry. This because a reliable cooperation between the government and industry is number one success factor for making TVET systems to sustain the economy and be able to meet labour market needs on a continuous basis.
- 9) Education of vocational teachers and instructors are essential if TVET programmes should succeed in South- South region of Nigeria and contribute to economic growth.

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