

# Achieving Youth Employment and National Security in Nigeria: TVET Imperatives

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## Abstract

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria is alarming and could promote social vices some of which are kidnapping, armed robbery, child trafficking, Cultism, Drug peddling and ritual killing. These social vices could in no small measure constitute a threat to national security as a matter of fact. Therefore, the development of a workable Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme in the country is the needed panacea to creating Job opportunities for the teeming youths. This will definitely reduce to its barest minimum threat to national security. This paper gives insight into: Youth employment as a vehicle for enhancing national security, ways adopted by other countries in promoting the poor perception of TVET, lessons to be learnt from other countries as regards enhancing the perception of the TVET, existing youth employment programmes in Nigeria and the way forward to boosting employment creation in Nigeria.

## Background of the Study

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has emerged as one of the most effective human resource development strategies that African countries need to embrace in order to train and modernize their technical workforce for rapid industrialization and national development. Of course, TVET seems to remain the most viable instrument for achieving youth employment and technological development the world over. Nigeria as a great nation has long realized this fact and has made several efforts to key in the technological development pursuit through development of her human resources and remain technologically relevant.

One of the most important features of TVET is its-orientation towards the world of work and the emphasis of the curriculum on the acquisition of employable skills. TVET can be delivered at different levels of sophistication. This implies that TVET can respond not only to the needs of different types of industries, but also to the different training needs of learners from different socio-economic and academic background and prepare for gainful employment and sustainable livelihoods. TVET is not only about knowing how to do things but also understanding why things are done in a particular manner.

Though TVET system in Nigeria like other African countries is threatened with many challenges, one of such major problems upon which other problems seem to emanate from is that of poor public perception of TVET . Evidence from studies indicate that many youths, parents and even government perceive TVET as not valuable as a general education (Afeiti, 2008, African Union (AU), 2007, Okoye & Okwelle, 2013, 2014). This negative perception has in no small measure discouraged numerous young persons from enrolling into TVET programmes, undermining the importance of this form of education to national development and sustainable development.

Also, TVET refers to a range of learning experiences which are relevant to the world of work. It is education which is mainly to lead participants to acquire the practical skills, know how and understanding, necessary for employment in a particular occupation, trade or group of occupations (Atchoarena & Delluc, 2002). Similarly, TVET plays a vital role in human resource development of the country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life. TVET thus equips people with a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are now recognized as indispensable for meaningful participation in work and life (Okwelle, 2013).

The primary objective of all TVET programmes is the acquisition of relevant knowledge, practical skills and attitudes for gainful employment in a particular trade or occupational areas. The need to link training to employment (either self or paid employment) is at the base of all best practices and strategies observed worldwide. Recently, in view of the rapid technological advances taking place in industries and the labour market in general, flexibility, adaptability, and life-long learning have become the second major objective of TVET. The third objective, which is particularly important for African countries, is to develop TVET as a vehicle for rapid industrialization, as well as economic empowerment and social mobility of the individual.

### **Youth Employment as a Vehicle for Enhancing National Security.**

Youth (a stage in life between adolescence and adulthood) constitutes a large proportion of Nigeria's population but despite their critical role in nations building, it is often observed that the country has not invested seriously in youth; thereby making them an army involved in unprofitable activities. Analysts believe that individual insecurity, which can be financial, job, material, economic and psychological will translate into insecurity in the society when it is not adequately addressed at the individual level.

The youth form the engine room of the labour force and represent the future of any nation. A vision of prosperous, peaceful and technologically-advanced society is therefore unrealizable in an environment where youths are not properly groomed and positioned.

This is because the energy, skills and aspirations of the youths are invaluable assets that no country can afford to squander. Also, the youths are the backbone of the development of the country. Indeed, if Nigeria is to be sustained as a viable entity there must be a very good plan to tap that energy and resourcefulness of the youth population to fast track economic development (Aiyede, 2010).

Really, sustainable development lies at the heart of the TVET system, and become the platform among the society it serves (Chepkemi, Watindi, Cheron, Ng' isirai & Rono, 2012).

However, creating employment for the youths is vital on many levels. Politically, employment opportunities give the population a stake in the peace process by providing young men and women with alternatives to violence. Economically, employment provides income to poor families, revives domestic demand for goods and services and stimulates overall growth. Socially, employment promotes social healing and improves social welfare. As a matter of fact, an idle youth could be seen as a devil's workshop in that various kinds of social vices are being identified with such youth.

Therefore, the employment of youth has positive implications for economic growth, political stability and national security. National security could be seen as a precondition for maintaining the survival, growth and development of a state.

National Security is made up of certain elements which include environmental security, economic security, military security and political security. Environmental security deals with environmental issues which threaten the national security of a nation in any manner. Economic security involves the creation and protection of jobs that supply defense and non-defense needs. Also, military security implies the capability of a nation to defend itself and/or deter military aggression. Political security is about the stability of the social order.

However, in Nigeria, national security could be threatened when unemployed and unskilled youths are involved in conflict. Therefore, sustainable national security could be established through the creation of employment opportunities for the youths in all its ramifications. The present employment situation in Nigeria has its roots in the country's economic development and performance since 1960. At independence, agriculture was the main stay of the Nigerian economy, accounting for 71.7% of her total employment (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

Owing to overdependence on oil which was catalysed by the huge revenue accrued to it, the agricultural sector was abandoned. Our economy has presently declined as oil prices swing on either side of \$50 per barrel. The consequence is increase in unemployment rate characterized by the birth of various forms of social vices which of course could constitute threat to national security.

### **Ways Adopted by other countries in boosting the perception of TVET .**

A number of countries have adopted different approaches in boosting the perception of TVET. A few countries are being looked at and these include:

1. **China:-** To improve the perception of vocational education, China has developed Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) at tertiary level over the past decade. IVET development at secondary and tertiary level in China, especially the opening of vocational universities since the mid — 1990s have contributed to a better perception of TVET pathways, mainly because they provide a degree. Following the Chinese government's policy of providing opportunities to students- of secondary vocational schools to be able to pursue higher education (tertiary level) there has been an increasing number of applicants for vocational schools.

Generally, China's policies for vocational education apparently have considerably improved its perception in the public perception.

2. **Korea:** The Korean government tried to improve the role of vocational education in accordance with the needs of the market regarding the development of technology. In relation to this, the National Commission for the Reform of Education and Ministry of Education and Human Resources launched plans to reform the vocational education system in 2004. To improve the perception of vocational education South Korea has made various efforts including enhancing cooperation with industry and connecting with local companies by establishing industrial technology education zones. Other programmes conducted to enhance the Perception of vocational education include offering courses after graduation. Furthermore, a new policy in Korea, whereby workers improve their skills by means of training to receive pay increase has come to stay. Such steps could increase the perception of TVET.

3. **Indonesia:** In an effort to make TVET more practice oriented, the concept of "factory schools" is promoted by the Ministry's department for vocational schools' development, and has been implemented in selected vocational schools. The results of students' work in factory schools are attracting more and more attention and people are beginning to notice that TVET can adopt and implement high technology within fields like machinery, electrical engineering, informatics and so forth, For example, Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK) Mikael in Solo, Central Java, implemented this model and called it production - based education and training (Samodra, 2012).

Students in SMK Mikael enjoy an extensive amount of practical learning with the theory taught in school closely related to the practice in the industry (Harian Urnum Pikiran Rakyat, 31 January, 2012). This mirrors almost the above mentioned dual system of vocational education and training. The type of vocational education offered at SMK Mikael is able to raise the poor perception of TVET in the society, proven by the increasing number of inscriptions of students and the fact that companies are offering jobs to student long before they have graduated. In addition, the existence of an event of national scale, namely the student competence competition (Lks: Lomba Kompetensi Siswa), held every year for SMK students throughout Indonesia as the national selection for the World Skills. Competition, is one of the efforts made to improve the quality, image and attractiveness of vocational education.

4. **Germany:** In the German dual system of vocational education, vocational students are primarily employees in companies (with an apprenticeship contract) and their attendance as part-time students in a vocational school is considered as purely secondary to their employment in industry. The dual system is firmly established in the Middle-Ages. An essential characteristic of the German dual system is the cooperation between private companies, on the one hand, and public vocational schools on the other. This cooperation is regulated by law (German Mission in the United States, 2012). The ratio between the time spent in the company and the hours, of theory in school is about 70%:30%, and the learning procedures are in accordance with the respective guidelines.

The attractiveness of this dual system in Germany is rooted in two aspects. Firstly, graduate of the dual system of vocational education continue in large number to work as a skilled worker in the same company, where they did their apprenticeship, or if they cannot, many find employment elsewhere easily. Secondly, the difference between the salary of a skilled worker and the average academically qualified employee is not too big, as long as top positions are hot taken into account. A skilled worker in a big company (e.g. in the automotive, energy, or chemical sectors) can earn as much money as a high school teacher, university lecturer, or an academically educated employee in the public service.

#### **Lessons to be learnt from other countries as regards enhancing the perception of TVET**

Some countries have programmes that could create numerous employment opportunities for the teeming population of the youths. These countries, as a matter of fact do not pay lip service to the enhancement of the value, image and attractiveness of TVET.

Germany is one the countries that could be seen as having a workable TVET programme. The German makes use of the dual system of vocational education. An essential characteristic of the German dual system is the cooperation between private companies, on the one hand, and public vocational schools on the other. This cooperation is regulated by law (German Misison in the United States, 2012). The ratio between the time spent in the company and the hours of theory in school is about 70%:30%

Also, Indonesia has made a great landmark in employment growth. This is made possible by adequately financing industrial growth of the country. Indonesian government invested heavily in agriculture by improving rural infrastructures, upgrading irrigation system and augmenting human capital in rural areas through widespread provision of health and educational services.

In Ghana, the Catholic Church is the single largest private provider of TVET, enrolling about 10,000 students in its 58 technical and vocational training institutions. This is made possible through the establishment of meaningful policies to catalyze the Faith based organizations to venture into promoting TVET programmes.

### **Existing Youths Employment Programmes in Nigeria**

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) has initiated various employment generation programmes like operation Feed the Nation, Youth Employment Scheme, National Economic and Employment Development Strategy and many more. Recently, the Federal government of Nigeria has come up with lofty programmes for employment creation some of which are YOUWIN, Sure-P, GIS, etc.

YOUWIN is an entrepreneurial scheme which is designed for entrepreneurs aged between 18 and 45 years. The objective is to create thousands of jobs by helping winners to strengthen and expand existing businesses as well as turn innovative ideas into solid businesses. YOUWIN stands for Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria.

SURE-P means subsidy Reinvestment and Employment Programme. It is implemented by the Federal Ministry of Finance with a mandate to provide short term employment for graduates. The scheme aims to achieve this by creating opportunity for them to be attached to firms/organizations, where they can work for a year and enjoy a monthly stipend of N18,000.00. Such interns can use the opportunity to gain working experience and enhance their employability.

The Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) is a social safety net component of Subsidy Reinvestment and Employment Programme. It is implemented by the Federal Ministry of Finance with a mandate to provide short term employment for graduates. The scheme aims to achieve this by creating opportunity for them to be attached to firms/organizations, where they can work for a year and enjoy a monthly stipend. Such interns can use the opportunity to gain working experience and enhance their employability.

Generally, the existing youth employment opportunities in Nigeria is just catering for a little percentage of the teeming unemployed youths and as such a number of youths are still involved in one social vice or another owing to idleness. This could constitute a threat to National security.

### **The Way Forward to Boosting Employment Creation in Nigeria**

Nigeria could improve upon the present employment generation level by holistically adapting and adopting some of the African and International practices in TVET delivery. Massive employment could be created by promoting a labour intensive agricultural revolution. This implies that the government should take it as a point of duty to improve rural infrastructures, upgrade Irrigation system and provide basic amenities in all the six zones of the country.

Again, the German dual system of vocational education could be effectively practiced in the country with all amount of seriousness to enhance employment generation.

In Ghana, the church or Faith based institutions are the largest private provider of TVET, therefore Nigeria could borrow a leaf from Ghana by ensuring that a good legislation is being put in place to promote the involvement of faith based institutions in the provision of TVET programmes which would in no small measure bring about lots of jobs creation.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Youth unemployment has security implication for virtually every nation, since desperation and idleness often lead young people to fall prey to criminal gangs, political violence, militancy, prostitution, internet scam, among others. Therefore, for a nation to get rid of some of these social vices that could constitute threat to national security, workable TVET based programmes that could bring about astronomical job creation should be embraced. The researcher is of the view that if these strategies identified in this study are given reasonable

attention, numerous jobs would be created for the teeming youth population in the country. Based on the foregoing, the paper recommends the following:

1. establishing strong linkage between TVET schools and industries in the area of students' internship or apprenticeship, funding support and retraining of TVET graduates;
2. youths should be provided with start-up capital in starting and expanding their businesses through cheaper access to loans, formation of cooperatives, leasing or grants;
3. corps members should be posted to large agricultural farms and institutions where for a period of one year they would be immersed in agricultural activities at the end of which grants like land and capital should be provided to them for farming;
4. the youths should be encouraged to seek self employment in the ICT sector;
5. the growth of small and medium enterprises should be encouraged by the provision of a conducive atmosphere; and
6. strategies to promote industrial expansion should be encouraged by both private and government.

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