

STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN AFRICA: LESSON FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Unemployment is a problem that world leaders and other stakeholders have shown concern and promise to curtail. General Assembly in the year 2000 launched Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to address eight key areas including globally. The youths are at forefront when discussing the problem of unemployment. The United Nations poverty and unemployment. Following the evaluation of MDGs in 2015, another programme tagged Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was launched targeting 2030. SDGs are larger in context than MDGs and are to fill up the gaps that exist during the MDGs execution period. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a programme designed to train an individual for skill acquisition purpose. The paper review looks into the opportunities offered by TVET in preparing the youth for employable life based on the strategies employed by some nations like Singapore, India, Europe and U.S. in addressing unemployment through TVET programmes that are worth emulating. Africa is facing youth unemployment and they need similar measures to downsize it to the minimal. The paper is of the opinion that TVET programme should be run with the involvement of industries in the formulation of curriculum, assessment and evaluation for sustainability.

Keywords: Unemployment, MDGs, SDGs, Training, TVET, Skill Acquisition, Development

The menace of unemployment among people especially the youth generates into social evils. Additionally their inability to secure job oriented training rendered them vulnerable to all act of violence and social disorder. Uriah, Ololube&Egbezor (2015) observed that “when the processes of socialization break down, the result is not always favourable for social order”.The youth are occupying a position of significant importance in the society in which their contributions help to effect radical changes and rapid development (Ajiboye& Adebayo, 2016) if trained in job oriented area under technical and vocational education and training (TVET).On this backgroundPavlova (2014) opined that TVET as an important factor in a country’s economic development.The youth occupy significant position in terms of economic development. They constitute significant number out of the population and are the working forces that keep the economy moving. The goal of the Millennium Project (I) is to develop and to promote practical plans for achieving the U.N. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for ending poverty and eradicating hunger(Sachs & Reid, 2006).The essential role of education and training in moving towards the goal of full employment through the development of the knowledge economycannot be over emphasised. High levels of knowledge, competencies and skills are considered to be the very basic conditions for active citizenship, employment and social cohesion. It is vital that education is meant to offer to an individual opportunity to contribute toward the progress of the society as the (European Commission (2001) recognized.

In 2015 European Center for Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) observed that “changes in unprecedented global competition, fast-changing technology, global regulatory standards, increasingly mobile populations, and the constant generation of new jobs and skills sets, the entry of new elements into TVET and new forms of TVET provision and qualification comes as no surprise”. Modern machineries are needed to run the market with the matching skills that are accessible via TVET institutions.In this respect nationsare matching toward competitive economy in the world with capacity of attaining sustainable growth, with more, higher quality jobs and greater social cohesion. To attain this position is preparing to develop knowledge-based economy and a strategy designed to modernize the educational system by embracing Technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Both Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are two programmes launched by the United Nation General Assembly in 2000 and 2016 respectively. The key areas touched by the programmes include poverty and unemployment that prevailed mostly in third world countries particularly African countries.The Open Working Group proposal was welcomed by the UN General

Assembly in September 2014 and became the principal guideline for integrating SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda. The SDGs recognize that eradicating poverty and inequality, creating inclusive economic growth and preserving the planet were at the forefront (World Health Organization, 2015).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Skill Development

The acquisition of skills by an individual is being incorporated into formal school curriculum in the form of Technical and Vocational Training and Education (TVTE). Skilled workforce is vital for the economy to compete and grow in the 21st century of economic integration, transformation and technological change. With the aim of producing the required manpower for employment UNESCO in Umoru and Okeke (2012) identified the objectives of technical and vocational education to include among others:

- a. A means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;
- b. An aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for a responsive citizenship;
- c. A method of facilitating poverty alleviation.

In this respect, Umoru and Okeke (2012) opined that “technical and vocational education through these objectives is given the necessary empowerment and mandate to provide quality technical and vocational education and training to effectively help students and workers develop their knowledge in science and technology across occupational areas”. This opened window for Ojimba (2012) to observe that “youth unemployment appears to be shooting up the sky because many of them lack “employability” skills that are often acquired from vocational schools”. To fully develop these skills for the purpose of industrial development the best approach would be the creation of a working party composed of government, employer, and union representatives to work out a system whereby vocational education becomes a joint venture. Partnership is the key to a successful integration effort through Collaborative efforts in curriculum development by a team of academic and vocational teachers, policy makers and industries to speed up skills delivery”.

Learning and acquiring technical skills will enable one to prepare for a job. On this ground Egwu in Iyiagu (2014) observed that human resource development, through well planned education and training initiatives can contribute significantly to promoting the interests of individuals, enterprises, economy and society within the nation. Through a well-structured TVET system there will be productivity growth, enhanced competitiveness and promotion of entrepreneurial activity and the ability to secure a job either by employment or self-employed is curtailing the prevailing problem of unemployment and insecurity.

Technical and Vocational Education Development through an Integration Approach

The essence of TVTE is to produce skilled personnel who are capable of working in the industries or to be self employed. TVET according to Jeanette (1981) needs five key approaches in order to achieve the objectives for the purpose of acquiring these skills and opportunities for the youth with capabilities of participating in the labour sector. The approaches reflect the curriculum content suitable for vocational education, which include:

1. *Integrated approach*, selecting and organizing curricula is one of the earliest techniques developed in vocational education. It calls for the accumulation of a cross section of the subject matter in a given field and the organization of this matter into a teaching sequence.
2. *Job analysis approach*, the curriculum specialist obtains information about specific occupations from workers, supervisors, or occupationally qualified teachers in order to determine content for programs designed to prepare workers for these specific occupations.
3. *Cluster approach* group occupations according to the degree of similarity in knowledge and abilities required of the worker. Specific job entry skills for group or cluster of occupations are taught usually to prepare youth for entry into a broad family of occupations rather than one specific occupation.
4. *Industry approach* prepares workers for functions performed within a specific industry. It focuses on the purposes of the industry rather than on the activities performed by an individual.
5. *Concept approach* emphasizes that each subject has its own peculiar structure and that the curriculum should be determined by identifying the fundamental principles or understandings giving structure to a subject. This approach is based on the belief that learning is to a great extent dependent upon mastery of the structure of the subject matter. (Janette, 1981)

The above approaches are aimed at making technical and vocational education relevant to the industrial need by producing competent workforce. However, the industrial need of education in which calls for collaborative and shared endeavor on the part of both educators and employers from business and industry is the key to industrial development. Closer consultation from business and industry on the establishment of training needs by institutions responsible for TVET programmes. Unless there is closer sharing and cross fertilization of ideas among the stakeholders, the technological ambition will remain on the blink.

In another perception such approach will give room to proper integration through meaningful learning outcome and establish connection between institutions and industries or to say learning and work. Connecting learning and work is a powerful set of initiative that combines education reform, workforce preparation and economic development to prepare individuals for a lifetime of learning, career success and citizenship.

Fundamental Right to TVET Development

It is understood that the neglect of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has afflicted much on the Africa continent (Iyangu, 2014). However, everyone has the right to education and technical and professional education shall be made generally available. It means that all individuals have the equal right to education at all levels without discrimination. The Education International (EI) (2004) earlier opined that “promoting greater access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) is particularly important because of the crucial role it plays in providing opportunities for people from all backgrounds”.

The success of TVET teacher and TVET education are highly dependent on strong linkages between the institution and the industry. The linkages will have their benefits to both teachers and students as highlighted by UNESCO in 2013:

- a) Industries provide students with the opportunity to observe their practices through partaking in internships;
- b) Learning about appropriate working behavior and culture;
- c) Help companies in choosing prospective workers once they have completed their TVET education;
- d) Through internship opportunities students are able to differentiate the importance and relevance of learning aims within the context of the world of work.

It is worth mentioning at this point that TVET is all about skills acquisition. Afeti (2013) opined that “the primary objective of all technical and vocational education and training is the acquisition of relevant knowledge, practical skills and attitudes for gainful employment in a particular trade or occupational area.” All indicators toward the role and position of TVTE in both economic and social development cannot be over emphasized. The forces are driving toward changes in the schools, industry and society. Often shaped by the needs of the changing economy, the challenges and opportunities became unique. Some countries like Singapore developed strategies for the economy through revitalization of youth via education with emphasis on improving the level of skills and quality of the education and training system, cutting across all institutions (Seng, 2007). The strategies run in three stages between 1980 and 2000

The European approach towards development of technical and vocational education is placed under the umbrella of European Center for Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). The center is charged with vocational training policy across Europe, including monitoring and evaluation of led down policies of the

programme in all member countries. Therefore, CEDEFOP believes in quality in education and training of the citizens of the region. It also meant to promote among others bringing all stakeholders in education and VTE, researchers, experts, those involved in improving learning curriculum and education and training providers” (CEDEFOP, 2009). Producing skilled workforce requires measurement and comparison before and after to ascertain activity is carried out based on a number of indicators. The indicators are meant to keep standard, which CEDEFOP (2009) believed that “are the driving forces behind VET improvement, with their roles to the objectives, criteria and standards to be pursued, accreditation procedures must be determine whether programmes are implemented in accordance with these objectives, criteria and standard”.

Similar approach was from Australian National Quality Council Communiqué in 2006 under Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education stated that “the National Quality Council (NQC) is placing a high priority on building strong links with Industries Skills Council (ISC). This will provide a direct connection between policy in relation to package and the development”.

Similarly, to achieve the necessary quality, in Romania, the National Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development actively involved all stakeholders particularly employers in the quality assurance process, and the National Quality Framework in TVTE has a crucial role in achieving the major objectives regarding vocational education training.

The German ‘Dual System’ of attending vocational school system and learning enterprise has given opportunity to 70% of all school leavers, aged between 15 and 19 years to undergo training (Afeti, 2013). The Dual System is “integrating work-based and school-based learning to prepare apprentices for a successful transition to full-time employment. A major strength of the Dual System is the high degree of engagement and ownership on the part of employers and other social partners” (OECD, 2010).

Developing TVET: Lesson for Africa

Promoting TVET is a challenge in Africa, having most countries with 5% or less enrolment into formal TVET secondary level with three out of five unemployed in sub-Saharan Africa are young people, mostly surviving in the informal economy (UNESCO, 2016).

Earlier to that, UNESCO (2015) the UNESCO-UNEVOC 2004 Bonn Declaration stated that “Since education is considered the key to effective development strategies, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) must be the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development”. On this basis UNESCO in 2015 reported that a call was made to Africa “to expand its investment in technical and vocational skills development if Africa is to generate the internal growth capable of

addressing the unemployment and underemployment of youth and adults, and of creating businesses, jobs and substantial economic revenue.”

Many countries in Asia and Europe are able to achieve tremendously in developing TVTE by opting to a system they believe will deliver them to the dream land. Many of them like Singapore mapped out an action plan covering period of 40 years (1960 to 2000) with direct link between industries and TVTE development. Europe as a whole established a regulatory body that design, formulate curriculum, establish effective supervision by involving and integrating industries in the assessment and evaluation of TVTE programmes throughout the region. The uniqueness of TVTE programme made it inevitable to establish direct and permanent linkages with industries. The economic rationale behind TVET it is believed as a source of skills, knowledge and technology needed to drive productivity in the knowledge-based and transition societies of the twenty-first century. Productivity is the basis for sustained economic growth (UNESCO, 2015).

Africa needs these types of holistic approach in TVET programme to which Afeti (2013) observed that African countries “have the responsibility to develop national vocational qualification frameworks and proficiency levels as well as standards for validation of training, certification and accreditation of training institutions”. Providing skilled workforce is a basic requirement for driving the engine of industrial and economic growth, and TVET holds the key to building this type of technical and entrepreneurial workforce. To this end, Mustapha and Greenan (2010) opined that a “paradigm shift is needed, in which collaboration and partnerships between schools and business/industry are viewed as the vehicles that will advance the industrialization agenda”. The end result is the relevance of the skills acquired through TVET is often enhanced by direct employer involvement in policy, strategy and programme development, delivery of training programmes, setting standards and assessing their attainment (UNESCO, 2015).

Conclusion

It is worth mentioning here that the role of TVTE in the general include provision of work ethic and the required skill to make an individual with the mindset contributing towards own self in particular and the society in general. However, TVTE is more than theory based instruction but practical or manipulative learning content. Likewise, countries must drag industries and participate actively in curriculum design, monitoring teaching and learning deliverance, assessment and evaluation of TVTE programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the above, it is imperative for government to put in place guidelines that will at the end meet the purpose of TVTE. The followings if looked into and accepted, TVTE can deliver Africa to realize the industrial development. Thus

- ❖ African Government need to redefine and redesign TVTE programme with given development or action plan and timeframe through which each stage could be assessed and evaluated,
- ❖ Industries and manufacturers should directly be part of the TVTE curriculum formulation body, monitoring, evaluation and assessment.
- ❖ Learning package for the students should include one full industrial internship to be carried out at the final year.
- ❖ Government should encourage industries to accept students on industrial attachment programme by paying some stipend to the industries based on the number of students accepted.
- ❖ The Dual-system in TVTE programme should be employed. Given priority to technical skills training more time rather than imposing certain subjects of study that impede the needed training outcome for TVTE students.
- ❖ African countries need data bank on the currency and accuracy of labour market information systems and on forecasts of labour market trends. This will provide information on demand skill must be needed.

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