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**CREATIVITY IN TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING: THE DRIVER IN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*To promote the production of skilled/semi-skilled technical and professional manpower, to revitalize and sustain the national economy, reduce unemployment and poverty through the setting and maintenance of high standards, provision of current and reliable information for planning and decision making, sourcing and disbursing of funds and adequate linkages with industry are the bane of TVET. This article focuses on the creativity in technical vocational education and training: the driver of economic growth and development in Nigeria. The article further looked at Technical Vocational Education and Training, government and TVET, TVET and poverty eradication, redesigning responsive secondary schools educational curricula as the alternative direction for TVET. It is recommended that there should be a closer cooperation and greater collaboration between education and employment*

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*particularly self-employment in order to help the youngsters acquire the necessary skills from the onset.*

Divergent opinions abound on what development is all about. While some people believe development is encapsulated in the sprouting of sophisticated physical structures, others look at it from the angle of increase in socio-economic activities and yet some others measure development in terms of improvement in financial standing. The inherent factor in the set of ideas of different schools of thought is that man is at the center of development and excellent management of human resources is a panacea for resolving all societal vices as well as the bedrock for overall societal development. More than any other consideration, the management of human resources entails creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests. The most viable option in managing the human resource is the development of the human intellect; making the individual very sound "upstairs" and more relevant to the needs of the contemporary world. Time-tested ideas and a successful implementation of these ideas have always been the products of highly trained and creative brains and abilities (Ajao, 2004).

The possession of these creative abilities ensures that an individual might exhibit creative behaviour to a noteworthy degree. This implies that the challenge of utilizing ideas has made many companies to turn to creativity training. Training in creativity can help the individual view problems from different perspectives it is also useful in generating unique solutions (Don, 2004). The need for training in creativity can be explained based on recent technological advances, short production cycles, global trade possibilities and fluctuating labour force hence, the link between creativity and problem-solving skills are therefore strong. Creativity is defined as the ability to develop ideas that are unique, useful and worthy of elaboration. It involves the use of ideas (working on ideas) until something comes out of it. Creativity is the ability to solve problems, fashion products and define new questions in a particular cultural setting. This implies that what is considered creative in one setting, may be a regular occurrence in another. The key word to creativity therefore is an insight which emphasizes the might or ability to see a new thing (Ohizees, 2006).

Creativity ensures that an individual is involved in initiating new projects, creating opportunities while solving problems. Creativity also ensures that individuals learn to produce practical solutions to newly defined initiatives. These and other things are what creative problem-solving in the realm of creativity encourage. In getting creative people to work together, a heterogeneous mix of preferred creative process style outperforms teams with a homogeneous mix in innovative work (Don, 2004). The creative process, a complicated process, involves the ability to generalize, evaluate, design, trouble-shoot,

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make decisions, create, modify, simplify, synthesize, hypothesize, and learn new skills. These new skills can be learnt through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Technical Vocational Education and Training "prepares learners for careers that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation." In other words, it is an "education designed to develop occupational skills." TVET gives individuals the skills to live, learn and work as a productive citizens in a global society.

TVET has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development. It is a necessary ingredient in any effort towards excellent management and development of human resources which is the bedrock of the development of other sectors. The idea is that technical and vocational education and training raise the productivity of workers and increase their earnings throughout their lifetime. Upgrading workers<sup>1</sup> skills would improve their productivity and advance their values and voices on the job. Despite its contributions, the leaders of Nigeria have not given this aspect of education the attention it deserves. And that is one of the reasons for the nation's underdevelopment. Technical Vocational Education and Training has continued to thrive in many societies and Nigeria has neglected this aspect of education. Consequently, Chinwe (2008) posited that the society lacks skilled technicians: bricklayers, carpenters, painters and auto mechanics; laboratory and pharmacy technicians, electrical/electronic technicians' skilled vocational nurses, etc).

The shabby performance of Nigeria's house builders (mason/bricklayers, etc) is no longer news. Hence individuals embarking on important projects now employ competent technicians from neighbouring countries. This is not to mention the havoc the poorly trained technicians have caused in the power sector. Nigeria's spotty electricity supply is the greatest bottleneck to national development. Every facet of the economy has been affected by lack of skilled technicians. The financial sector lacks technicians to regulate the banks and to develop financial software to properly tackle the rising fraudulent activities in the banking sector. The neglect of TVET is socially and economically injurious because it has made many of the graduates lack "employability" skills hence, robbing the nation the contributions the graduates would make to national development. Nigeria is today wearing the toga of a poor state. Although technical and vocational education seem deficient in 'citizenship or leadership training' (Friedman, 1982) it provides students with "life skills" (Alwasilah, 2002) to become productive entrepreneurs as it engenders creative and innovative ideas, enlarge the economic pie, and increase personal freedom. Most of the so-called "expatriate engineers" who are being paid millions of dollars to build Nigerian's roads and bridges are graduates of TVET colleges, yet the leaders do not take technical institutions seriously. It is no longer news that the nation's youth unemployment rate has been shooting up the sky.

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But it is not enough to ask the youths to become "entrepreneurs" and reject "social vices" or to be "patriotic" without providing them with skills and financial resources for self-employment or for the public servants to lead by good examples. As the Roman Historian, Plutarch (AD 46-120) noted "The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled." Given their corrupt and greedy lifestyles, Nigerian's leaders do not seem to care about integrity or moral values. They are good at predicting the future without creating it. As Peter Drucker has observed "If you want to predict the future, create it." Like unemployment, poverty is ravaging the society. It has vastly been documented that more than 80 per cent of Nigerians live on less than one dollar per day. There should be some form of school-work-based learning incorporated in schools in Nigeria as integral part of national development strategy (Dike, 2006). Empowering the people with technical skills would enhance their productivity and national development.

### **Technical Vocational Education and Training**

There is correlation amongst levels of education, unemployment and poverty. Education increases the stock of human capital which in turn, increases labour productivity and wages. Since labour is by far the most important asset of the poor, increasing the education of the poor will tend to reduce poverty. Nigerian poverty is in high form those with little or no education. Based on this, the political rhetoric without action will not solve Nigeria's problems; the progress of Nigeria lies in the productivity of its citizens made possible through quality Technical Vocational Education and Training (Oyebolu, 2011).

Technical vocational educations and training have been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development. It is unfortunate that over time, Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Colleges of Education and other educational institutions have shifted their focus to academic qualifications rather than skill acquisition and problem solving abilities. This has among other things, resulted in the dearth of skilled workers needed to satisfy the country's developmental needs. The half-baked roadside auto-repairer for instance often cause more damages to vehicles; poorly trained commercial drivers are mostly the cause of many road accidents; half-baked auxiliary nurses in the hospitals have sent many people to their graves rather too early; a large chunk of the country's resources are expended every year on foreign expatriate engineers whom the country depends on for the construction of Nigerian roads and bridges. The list is endless. The desire to reverse this undesirable situation justifies the current administration's emphasis on the development of technical vocational education and training departments in tertiary institutions in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

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Consequently, the society needs competent auto repairers and truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, computer engineers, database and web/network technicians, bookkeepers, clerks, medical technicians, vocational nurses etc, to function well. Technical Vocational Education and Training provides the much needed skilled manpower in these various spheres. Above all, it holds the key to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), since it is a catalyst for creating employment opportunities. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) have been recognized the world over as tools for empowering people, especially the youth, for sustainable livelihood and social-economic development. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) recommendations of 2000 on technical vocational education and training for the twenty-first century, defined TVET as those aspects of education 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 occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. TVET is further understood to be:

- a. an integral part of general education;
- b. a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;
- c. an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- d. an instrument for promoting environmentally sound suitable development and
- e. a method of alleviating poverty (UNESCO, 2008).
- f. The overriding goals of TVET in Nigeria are to:
- g. provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels;
- h. provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;
- i. give training and impart necessary skills to individual who shall be self reliant economically (NBTE, 2013).

The development of technical and vocational skills is vital to economic development for two important reasons. First, technical and vocational skills are needed for enterprise productivity and profitability, as well as for national productivity and wealth creation. Without the necessary technical skills, enterprise and national growth can be seriously hobbled. Technological creativity, innovation and economic growth fuel the demand for skilled workers. The need for technical and vocational skills is increasing because of a convergence of factors—technological change, changes in work organization, growing economic openness and competitiveness, and capital deepening (increasing capital per worker). The second reason is that the development of technical and vocational skills is of vital importance because it is essential for individual prosperity. Skills enable the individual to increase productivity and income. This is

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especially important for those who are seeking out a living in the informal sector of the economy. Today in Nigeria, population growth and urbanization, poverty and lack of income generating capacity and failure of graduates from schools system to secure employment clearly highlights the importance of career development which is achievable through TVET. To enable those still in post- secondary schools to be relevant to the world of work as well as to draw the majority of jobless people out of the unemployment market, there is need to reposition TVET as the best means to improve economic opportunities for the teaming youths which will eventually, enhance economic development of Nigeria (Dawodu, 2000).

### **Government and Technical Vocational Education and Training**

Skill training enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy. Worldwide, countries are renewing efforts to promote technical vocational education and training, because it is the only way to prepare young people for world of work which reaches out to the marginalized and excluded groups to engage them in income-generating livelihoods. High unemployment has been leading to increasing poverty and serious social problems in Nigeria. Coincidentally, there has been a decline in TVET enrolments (Don. 2004). Less than percent of secondary schools was oriented towards technical and vocational skills. Therefore, there is the need to revitalise TVET as the best means of improving economic opportunities for the teaming youths of Nigeria. It is in recognition of this, that government has gone into agreement with the UNESCO's section for technical vocational education and training through the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). Currently, NBTE is implementing a project that aims to better equip large numbers of young Nigerians for a world of work. A cost sharing agreement was therefore signed in 2000, between UNESCO and Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education to revise the curricula for secondary technical colleges and post secondary polytechnics and established a new system of continuing technical staff development and training, (EFA Reports, 2000). But still the Nigerian government need to do more in view of the enormity of the problem.

In a bid to strengthen TVET system as part of the human resource and manpower development to meet present and future needs for rapid socio-economic development of the nation, the federal government through the National Board for Technical Education in 2000 and 2007 signed an Aide Memoire with UNESCO for the development of new curricula, e-books and training manual for use in polytechnics, monotronics and other specialized institutions. To this end, the NBTE (2013) has produced 200 new curricula for National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma (HND), Post-Higher National Diploma (PHND) programmes offered in polytechnics, monotronics and colleges of technology. The board in addition, produced 20 new curricula for ND programmes offered in innovation enterprise institution, and 88 new

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curricula for programmes offered by vocational enterprise institutions and developed 356 e-books.

To widen access to TVET and encourage private participation in skill training, the Federal Ministry of Education approved the establishment of private sector-led vocational enterprise institutions and innovation enterprise institutions. Between 2007 and 2010, a total of 49 IEs and 13VEIs were approved by the Minister of Education, while 23 additional ones were given operational licenses. The IEs and VEIs are to cater for the interest of school leavers who wish to acquire demonstrable practical to secure employment or generate employment; persons seeking for career paths that do not need university degrees; persons without time for full time study but want to enhance their skills; persons wishing to go into self-employment; university graduates seeking employable skills and adults seeking to re-skill themselves (NBTE, 2013).

Other notable efforts of the federal government were the release of £15bn Trust Fund for the supply and installation of science laboratory and workshop equipments in 51 beneficiary polytechnics and monotechnics, the \$42 million five-year TVET project for upgrading of 10 TVET institutions and restructuring the present supply-driven TVET into demand-driven system that responds to the needs of the private sector financed by the Federal ministry of education-African Development Bank, the establishment of 6 additional staff development centres in six geo-political zone of the country for polytechnics staff development. These centres are: South South - Delta state polytechnic Otefe-Ogharra; South East - Akanu Ibiam Federal polytechnic Unwana; South West -Federal polytechnic, Ilaro; North East - Federal polytechnic, Damaturu and North West - Kano state polytechnic (Federal Ministry of Education, 2003).

### **TVET and Poverty Eradication**

Wealth can only be created and sustained by individuals, teams, groups and organizations that share a common mission and a vision, coupled with the fact that goals are set up to ensure that capacity, capabilities, and the right competencies to manage and optimize resources are available in huge quantity. Education in whatever form, is aimed at modelling a child or the individual into a better person relevant to his immediate environment. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without education. Development is a process where an economy undergoes social and economic transformation leading to a rise in the standard of living, access to basic amenities for all through knowledge. (Seng 2010). It is in recognition of the above concept of development that TVET in empowering youth for poverty alleviation should be given utmost priority by government having in mind the future consequence and task ahead for sustainable development. The future prospect and success of TVET would depend on the continuation and expansion of the existing training programmes, and strengthening of the existing cooperation both nationally and internationally, as well as by starting

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non-formal training programmes for (the unemployed youths and the community at large as part of government poverty- alleviation efforts toward sustained welfare of the youth and development,

The way the production forces in the economy are organised, determines the development process of any country. For most countries, the development of industry depends greatly on the private sector with entrepreneurship playing a major role. Entrepreneurship is the capacity and attitude of a person to undertake venture with a risk or failure. It demands that the individual be prepared to assume a reasonable degree of risk and a good leader in addition to being highly innovative. According to Ohizee (2000), since entrepreneurship involves leadership, leadership abilities determines a person's or organisation's effectiveness. The entrepreneurship could become a major avenue to accelerate economic growth and create job opportunities. Many youths aspire to become a successful entrepreneurs but their ability to make use of their skills remain constrained if they are not empowered.

At the policy level, TVET plays a critical access and equity role in achieving employment for youths, managing work/life balance, and providing citizenship and parental skills for youths. Therefore, expanding TVET is integral youth in crisis or post conflict situations, tackling poverty and promulgating cultural inclusion for tolerant peaceful society. The youths, through TVHT education, are encouraged to assume entrepreneurial position as [here is nothing that can surpass the effectiveness of hands on training (Alwasilah, 2002). Through TVET. the youths who are full of fresh ideas & ingenuity can build up confidence, resourcefulness and experience early in life, so that they can begin to change the society into a bloomy economy thereby, eradicating poverty.

### **Redesigning a Reponsive Secondary Schools Education Curricula as the Alternative Direction for TVET**

One major aspect of Nigerian education that has been quite often criticized is the curriculum. According to Ajayi (1963), the early critics they members of the Phelps-Stokes and Advisory Commissions who submitted their separate reports in 1925. They observed that education in Africa generally had not been adapted to the needs and aspirations of the people. It is quite difficult to advance with improving the processes and the outcomes of educational quality without developing a comprehensive curriculum vision that justifies why and what it is relevant and pertinent (basic and needed) to teach children and young people according to an overall interpretation of societal expectations and demands. For as late as the 1960s (even till date), education in African schools, particularly in Nigerian grammar schools, was/is still "too literary; not practical, not adapted to the needs of a developing agricultural nation." This type of academic

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education only tends to produce proud, lazy people who dislike manual labour and prefer white-collar jobs (Ajayi, 1963).

In support of the above, Ajibola (2008) rightly recognized that curriculum issues, either in an explicit or an implicit manner, are inextricably linked to current thinking and action on educational concerns and reforms around the world. He noted that Nigerian educational system has gone through various development stages and changes vis-a-vis curriculum issues. The selection and organization of curriculum content, curriculum implementation and evaluation, the development, distribution and use of teaching materials, and the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of society are also problems associated with the Nigerian educational system. Therefore, the need for transformation in curriculum for all the educational levels becomes necessary (Ajibola, 2008).

Moreno (2006) concurred that: 'Educational reform all over the world is increasingly curriculum-based, as mounting pressures and demands for change tend to target and focus on both the structures and the very content of school curricula'. The National Curriculum Conference of September 1969 was the first attempt by Nigerians to formulate a school curriculum that is relevant to the goals, needs and aspirations of Nigerians. Today, all educational authorities in Nigeria are aware of the pressing need to relate curricula, at all levels of education, to national man power needs. However, Soyombo in Ajibola (2008) contended that unfortunately, 52 years after independence, none of the stated goals has been fully achieved.

An important conceptual landmark in the effort to modernize and vitalize TVET was the publication of the first "National Plan of Vocational and Technical Education in the Republic of Nigeria", prepared by Skapski (1966). Skapski called for action by "a group of professionally competent educators" united by a sense of mission and aware of relevant achievements in other countries to move the change process forward. Since the publication in 1966, Skapski's master plan has been the spirit of innovation and change in the profile of TVE in Nigeria. Most of the recommendations have been implemented in one form or the other including the 3-3 secondary education policy from 1982, the establishment of NBTE in 1977, ITF in 1971 and uniform educational structure and content nation-wide from 1977; some recommendations are yet to be implemented.

According to Moreno (2006), redesigning the curricula could be in terms of or can be classified into:

1. policy (which emphasizes on the duration of stay at various tiers of educational levels and import of the scheme; e.g. Universal Basic Education, etc);

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2. Objective, content (subjects/courses taught in schools: core and elective subjects and their contents, number of subjects. In other words, focus should be on the syllabus); and
3. Methods (classroom transactions optimally have four dimensional character, involving interactions between teacher and pupil, pupil and pupil, teacher and material, and pupil and material).

What predominates in most Nigerian classrooms, from primary through to postgraduate level, is the unidirectional lecture mode, with minimal use of materials, questioning of teachers or pupil - pupil interaction.), material and changes in evaluation techniques (some special emphasis have been placed on the use of comprehensive and continuous assessment in schools. Similarly, new attention is been given to practical experiences and tests in the form of teaching practice and industrial attachment during which learners are observed and assessed).

To actualize unemployment and poverty reduction, the direction and focus should be on (ii) objective and content. No positive impact will be made with system that promotes theoretical knowledge, places emphasis on paper certification rather than stressing the development of innate abilities in a learner evolving through training or practice. Thus, the need for curriculum transformation becomes imperative (Bolaji, 2007). The need for a paradigm shift from theoretical and paper certification to a practical application of knowledge necessary for future employment and skills development for self employment should be the cardinal objectives of Nigerian education. Experiences of educational reforms almost all over (he world have shown that curriculum is at the same time a policy and a technical issue, a process and a product, involving a wide range of institution, actors. This is where the roles of the federal and state ministries of education, the National Board for Technical Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics/Specialized institutions, Vocational and Innovation Enterprise Institutes, stakeholders in Technical and Vocational Education and Training come to the fore. The process of constructing the curriculum is unique to each national setting. It is a complex outcome of the opinions and solutions that key stakeholders propose for society's requirements and needs (NBTE, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria can become an economic power-house (and realize its visions) only if proper attention is given to education technological development promotes rewards creativity, channel its material human resources to productive use. The leaders must recognize the relevance of technical and vocational education in national development, adopt and adapt what works in developed nations. The resources being wasted in the on-going false re-branding campaign should have been used to re-brand the nation's education sector. No amount of rhetoric (or fanciful slogan) would solve Nigeria's

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socio-political and economic problems. The leaders could salvage Nigeria's image by re-branding their mentality and doing the right thing: tackle corruption, reform the electoral system and fix the dilapidated institutions. Thus, without a fundamental shift in values, beliefs and thinking, and without technological capability, Nigeria will continue to dream of becoming a 'Great Nation'.

### **Recommendations**

Now that the government has identified a sector that holds the key to the nation's future, it is pertinent that it be made completely viable. Based on the the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should earmark a substantial amount of the annual budget to fund technical vocational education and training.
2. Efforts should also be intensified towards educating and sensitizing the public on the benefits associated with technical education.
3. It is sad that many parents do not see the advantage of sending their children to technical school over the training institutions with emphasis on academics, where the apprentice learns a trade under the boss.
4. There should be a closer cooperation and greater collaboration between education and employment particularly self-employment in order to help the youngsters acquire the necessary skills from the onset.
5. There should be less emphasis on certificates/ examinations in implementing the curricula content of the various programmes. Acquisition of practical skills should be stressed on the final outcome.

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