
THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT: PANACEA FOR THE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) GRADUATES SUSTAINABLE SELF-EMPLOYMENT

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Abstract

Success is a result of the combination of many factors. Some of these factors are however beyond the immediate control of an aspiring individual. Enabling environment is one of such factors on which the operation and success of the graduates of the Vocational and Technical Education and Training (TVET) depend upon for a sustainable self-employment. This work looks at what constitutes vocational and technical education and training, the meaning and the state of enabling environment in Nigeria and the impact of this on the graduates of TVET. The paper recommends among other things that government should apart from approving training institutions check the products for employability; TVET graduates should form themselves into formidable associations for the purpose of advocacy.

High unemployment among the youths is one of the biggest problems confronting societies around the world. Barnes (2012) in her assertion further asked “but do we really know how bad the situation is? Basically the statistics are terrifying. The United Nations’ International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that close to 75 million 15 to 24-year olds around the world are out of work. ILO office says youth unemployment is likely to rise globally to 12.9 percent by 2017 as more young people leave the work force and as the euro crises spreads to emerging economies. The vanguard online newspaper of 17th November, 2012 with the title “Nigeria Unemployment-Biggest Frustration Among Youths” revealed that the percentage of labour force that is without job is alarming while the army of the under employed youths is frightening”.

In another report released by the United Nations (UN), Nigerian unemployment rate under Mr. Jonathan's watch dropped from 21.1 percent in 2010 to 23.9 percent. The report further shows that about one in four Nigerians are currently unemployed. Nigeria according to the said report has one of the worst youth unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa at 37.7 percent which means two in five Nigerian youths are unemployed. The matter is compounded daily as higher institutions churn out fresh graduates to add to the already saturated labour market.

Youths do not all have the same kind of education and training. The vocational and Technical Education and Training (TVET) graduates are supposedly advantaged and disposed to self-employment by their orientation. This expectation and roles are eloquently enunciated in the National Policy of Education. But are they spared of this monster called unemployment?

This paper seeks to examine the concept and philosophy of TVET, the roles TVET has been assigned that pre-disposed its graduates to sustainable self-employment, and enabling environment as factors contributing to self-employment of TVET graduates. The paper concludes with recommendations and conclusion.

The Concept of the Vocational and Technical Education and Training (TVET)

TVET is an aspect of education designed to prepare students for industry, agriculture, commerce, home economics which is usually provided at the senior secondary lower tertiary level. According to the National Policy on Education (NPE) it is designed as the aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. In this sense, it forms a practical segment of education that involves skill acquisition. Therefore technical education is a subset of vocational education. However, TVET can also be seen as that education designed to prepare individuals for gainful and sustainable self-employment as semi-skilled workers or skilled workers or technicians or sub-professional in recognized occupations or to prepare individuals for enrolment in advanced technical education programme.

In the past various terms have been used to describe elements of the fields that are now conceived as comprising TVET. The second International Congress on technical and vocational education held in Seoul in 1999 decided that the best, most comprehensive term to use is TVET.

Nyanabo and Ahukannah (2002) saw vocational education as education that leads to the acquisition of practical and manipulative skills designed to produce or retain manpower at the crafts man and artisan levels and is provided in post-primary

The Enabling Environment: Panacea...

institutions or skill acquisition workshops, certification, where necessary, being at the level of the trade test or equivalent. Vocational education therefore means training or retraining in technical occupation that are geared towards preparing the learner for entrance into a technical trade or to upgrade existing skills. Vocational education includes non-formal training obtained outside the organized school system in trades and crafts such as weaving, carving, carpentry, dress making, soap making, masonry, wine tapping, etc. including trading in all kinds of merchandise. Vocational education also includes formal technical training provided by organized formal schools and classes designed to prepare beneficiaries for gainful employment in semi-skilled occupation. Vocational education therefore covers all semi-skilled and skilled occupations requiring less than three years of training.

The authors explore the scope of vocational and technical occupations to include commercial occupations, industrial and service occupations where the trainees are prepared for the world of work.

The Role of TVET in National Development

The economy needs skilled people to produce the goods and services demanded by the society. People have different aptitudes arising from natural endowments: some have flare for technical work; some for artistic work etc. TVET will help develop this flare and aptitude in people to make them more productive people needed to work to earn their daily bread and in so doing they satisfy the occupational needs of their community and nation Nigeria.

Nigeria was formerly an agrarian nation that depended solely on agriculture for local consumption and for earning foreign exchange. Today, however Nigeria is diversifying and becoming industrialized, so people need occupational skills to take up jobs in the emerging industries. Therefore the roles of TEVT are many and diversified .The major concern in this paper is the capability to be self-employed thus reduce unemployment and being employers of labour rather than employees.

TVET have assigned roles. Nyanabo and Ahukannah (2002:105) referred to the National Policy on Education (1981) as having assigned TVET the following roles.

1. To provide trained man power in applied science, technology and commerce, particularly at sub-professional levels.
2. To provide technical knowledge and educational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development
3. To produce people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man
4. To give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.

Academic Excellence

5. To 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
6. To enable young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

When the above listed roles are fulfilled, advantages are bound to accrue from vocational – technical education. Those advantages are as follows:

1. Provision of manpower that possess the occupational skills and knowledge.
2. Reduction in unemployment because people who have technical skills will be self-employed if paid employment is not preferred.
3. Increase in production of goods and services because production provided will become more efficient due to management by trained and knowledgeable personnel.
4. Increase in foreign investment and foreign exchange earnings, because surplus production will result from industrial efficiency and the surplus products will be exported.
5. Reduction in the dependence on foreign and technical expertise because locally trained personnel will be available to fill vacant positions.
6. Stable social orientation and existence, because anybody who has “handwork” is better prepared to take his share of the national cake.

The practical implication of the above is that vocational and technical education and training graduates are not expected in the majority of cases to search and queue for paid employment. They are to take to reliable and sustainable self-employment for national development. It is for the above that the graduates were taught entrepreneurship in order to be risk takers in viable ventures. Such graduates are the driving force in technological breakthrough in other countries or economies.

Defining Enabling Environment

Definition of enabling environment is numerous, and range from all encompassing to narrow. A typical general definition of enabling environment is a set of interrelated conditions such as legal, bureaucratic, fiscal, informational, political and cultural-that impact on the capacity of development actors to engage in development processes in a sustained and effective manner (Thindwa, 2001:3) part of narrowing

The Enabling Environment: Panacea...

down the definition is to what is referred to as Business Enabling Environment (BEE) which includes norms and customs, laws, regulations policies, international trade agreements and public infrastructure that either facilitate or hinder the movement of goods and services along its value chain. The BEE at the national and local level encompasses policies, administrative procedures, enacted regulations and the state of public infrastructure. Analysis of BEE at these levels may need to be broken down in terms of firm size since there may be constraints and opportunities distinctly facing micro and small enterprises.

Table 1: Features of the Enabling Environment

Category of Environmental Factors	Key enabling feature
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Non discriminatory frame work -Encouragement of markets and open competition -Supportive of investment (including physical security) -Low transactions costs, credible commitment
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Democratic system that supports pluralism, accountability, transparency and responsiveness -Processes that encourage participation, social contact and state legitimacy. -Rule of law, contract enforcement, respect for human rights and property rights.
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Efficient service delivery capacity -Low level of competition -Institutional check and balance -Decentralization -Civil service meritocracy
Socio-cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Presence of social capital and trust -Tolerance of diversity -Norms of in deservedness, equity and fairness -Belief in the value and efficiency of individual
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Policies and investment in health education ----- Workforce development, information technology science and research -Adequate infrastructural development -Adequate funding and institutional capacity

The table highlights the extent to which the features of the enabling environment reflect the public-goods producing function of government, which relates

to the basic rationale for public sector intervention in helping products of vocational and technical education and training to engage in sustainable self-employment. However, the table also makes it clear that government is not the only actor involved in contributing to an enabling environment. As the governance terminology reflects societal problem-solving, the production of public goods and social capital formations are not the sole purview of government actors, but should be with private sector collaboration.

Enabling Environment for TVET Graduates for Sustainable Self-Employment

Nigeria is not left out as part of the changing world economy which strives for a more articulate policy or sustainable employment of her citizens some of these citizens are products of TVET. This type of ventures could transform into something more formidable through worthwhile enabling environment.

Most world economics according to Ubom (2003:20) are characterized by a large number of micro/cottage, small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) mainly in the informal sector. In many economies they account for a large segment of productive population. Nigeria falls within this later category of economies. The SMEs in Nigeria account for over 95 percent of non-oil productive activities outside agriculture which positions them as potentially strong agents of economic growth and sustainable development.

In contrast however many economies like India, enabling environment in Nigeria have not encouraged the sector enough. The development of India SMEs today has grown beyond being small in size to become the backbone of the industrial development of the country, Ubom (2002:24). The following internal and external factors should evidently characterize the enabling environment in order to give a boost to TVET graduate sustainable self-employment in Nigeria.

Internal Factors

1. Stable macro-economic environment
2. Consistent character of policy measures
3. Sound implementation and co-ordination efforts on SMEs
4. Presence of sustainable institutional mechanism
5. Serviceable infrastructural facilities, that is, road/railway system, water supply, electrical power, telecommunication
6. Executive financial support system

External Factors

1. Needed equipment for both training and usage during operation and running of enterprises
2. Process technologies, design, patents etc.
3. High level of technical skills in form of technological managerial, entrepreneurial and strategic capabilities
4. Level playing field by reducing unnecessary competition through import restrictions on foreign goods
5. Availability of productive resources such as finance
6. Removal of trade barriers and other stringent quality requirement set by some developed countries.

The Nigerian government under the democratic dispensations from inception in 1999 has initiated a number of strategies to ameliorate the various constraints militating against effective contribution of micro scale enterprises to the national development. The new policy measure, programme, and activities which constitute part of support system for SMEs development in Nigeria are numerous, but over the time have not yielded a positive shift forward.

Conclusion

Rome, it is said was not built in a day. Based on the findings there is no viable alternative to self-employment. To avoid the frustration and embarrassment of poverty due to unemployment, graduates of TVET should be ready to take risks which pays in the long-run.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the research lists the following recommendations;

1. The government should not only approve and mandate training institutions to produce graduates in TVET, but also check the quality of the products to determine their employability.
2. There should be proper matching or integration of entrepreneurship and generic skills in the actual delivery of learning sessions.
3. Full reformation of TVET service delivery to widen access and improve quality.
4. An access to micro finance institution appears to be difficult for young people, it is extremely relevant that TVET providers invest in the initial start up of small business via seed money, leasing of equipments and or linking of students with organizations specialized in business development (example, sending a list of graduates to these organizations that supports business development)

Academic Excellence

5. Teachers and trainers should emphasize regularly to their students that the mission and vision of TVET is self-reliance and graduates should start with what is available while looking forward to better days.
6. Students and graduates of TVET should form themselves into formidable associations and groups for purpose of lobbying and advocacy for the government provision of enabling environment.

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