

THE VISION AND MISSION OF TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND COHESION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE NORTHEAST EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The inclusion of technical/vocational education (TVE) in the education structure of Nigeria was consciously done to not only lead to skills acquisition but also to enable individuals integrate themselves and fit properly into the Nigerian society, being gainfully employed and self-reliant. In spite of efforts by various governments to give it the necessary backing it deserves, such as the provision of facilities, manpower training, employment generation and the establishment of schemes like NYSC, SIWES and the Federal Character Commission, there is still much that needs to be desired. The study set out to determine the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion, taking North-Eastern Nigeria as a case study. The structured questionnaire was randomly administered in three States, namely, Adamawa, Bauchi and Bornu. The simple statistical method of frequency/percentage was used to analyze the data collected. Findings revealed that the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion in the 21st century are increased skill training, freedom of mobility for skill practice, employment generation, even development and prudent management of resources. Others are increased funding, and religious and ethnic tolerance.

Introduction

Technical/Vocational Education (TVE) was introduced into the Nigerian education system as a result of the apparent need to put the nation on the path of technological growth and development. In essence, the vision and mission of TVE were not just to equip individuals with practical skills but they also aimed at integrating them into the Nigerian society, to peacefully and effectively practise their skills. However, even with the expansion in technical schools/colleges, manpower requirement and facilities, there is still much that needs to be desired. Today, the unity of the country has been constantly questioned by regional tensions and conflicts. These have taken various dimensions, ranging from ethnic to religious tensions and conflicts (Usman, 2002). This can be attributed to the attitude of the colonial masters in which they adopted a separatist ideology in local governance (Takaya, 1996). Furthermore, the colonial masters condemned our language, culture and customs (Ynkhibu & Mumah, 2001). Consequently, the North/South, East/West, Hausa/Yoruba dichotomy, has persisted. From independence to date, the clamour for regional recognition and the sharing of the national cake has intensified. In addition, the TVE environment has been hampered by poor leadership, political instability, corruption and indiscipline, rising inflation, and long years of military rule (Ogunrinola, 2000; Ezeigbo, 2000). Consequently, the concept of integration and cohesion, viewed as the tendency for the Nigerian people to be united in their diversities, to have the freedom to live, school, express their opinions, conduct their businesses and practise their faith without fear or hindrance, as they work to promote a common national interest, has been made of no effect. It was against this background that the study set out to:

1. Assess the vision and mission of technical/vocational education in the 21st century.
2. Assess the strategy (s) Government has less adopted towards achieving the objectives of TVE.
3. Determine the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion in the 21st century.
4. Examine the best scheme that has assisted TVE in national integration and cohesion.
5. Determine the problem (s) which besets the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion.
6. Find out the consequences the problem (s) has on the general well-being of Nigerians.

The Vision and Mission of TVE

The vision and mission of TVE are clearly expressed in the objectives of the National Policy on Education (1998) which are outlined as follows:

1. To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce, particularly at sub-professional grades.
2. To provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.
3. To provide 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 on professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
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 our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

The strategies set forth by Government to achieve the above objectives, as shown by the National Policy in Education (1998), can be summarized, among others, as follows:

1. Expansion in facilities for the training of technical teachers.
2. In recruiting technical teachers, the industrial experiences of the teachers will be given the highest premium. Graduates of the Higher National Diploma (HND) would be placed at par with their counterparts from the university.
3. The teaching of science and technology in an integrated manner would be undertaken in our schools in order for students to appreciate the practical implications of basic ideas.
4. The broadening of the curriculum in technical schools, polytechnics and colleges of technology to include courses in such fields as food processing and preservation, clothing manufacture and the technology of service machines, relevant to the present and 'future national needs. In addition, the range of courses in the technical colleges/trade centres would be widened to include plumbing, electrical installation, block laying, concreting, painting and decorating.
5. More effort will be made to encourage women participation in wider areas of technical education.
6. In designing courses, industry and Government will be consulted with a view to giving such courses greater practical relevance. In this connection, increased use will be made of Advisory Boards for each group of courses and trades.
7. State Government should establish multi-purpose vocational centres or other similar institutions for artisan training. Junior secondary schools with equipped workshops will be used to accommodate the artisan training centres. Emphasis in each centre should be placed on the crafts and cottage industries within the locality.
8. Every Local Government Area should have a technical school.
9. Industries will be required to assist in apprenticeship training, as Advanced Craft courses are introduced by States for the production of craftsmen for foremen and supervisory positions.
10. Increased funding for TVE at both Federal and State levels.
11. NBTE, as a regulatory body, will also accredit courses run in the non-formal sector. The above strategies, when effectively adopted, will achieve the aims and objectives of TVE.

The siting of industries, for instance, will undoubtedly create employment for the citizenry and consequently reduce many social vices. Therefore, as Yakubu and Mumah (2001) rightly observed, " technological and vocational education and training must be such that it leads to self-reliance within the shortest time possible."

Problems Militating Against TVE Practice in National Integration and Cohesion

Poor leadership, political instability, fraud, low capacity utilization and long years of military rule have been identified as factors responsible for breaching the peace, essential for co-existence and profitable TVE practice (Ogunrinola, 2000; Ezeigbo, 2000). To contain these, Abu (2001) advocated for ethno-religious tolerance, respect for the rule of law, equity and even development, and the right to

self-determination. These are only possible however, when public enlightenment programmes are mounted by Government and well-meaning organizations. Suffice it to add that national integration and cohesion must be viewed as the tendency for the Nigerian people to be united in their diversities, to have the freedom to live, school, move about, express their opinions, practise their faith without fear or hindrance, and to work together to-promote a common national interest.

Methodology

As a survey research, the North-East sub region was taken as the study area. This region has 6 States: Adamawa, Taraba, Gombe, Banchi, Yobe and Bornu States. However, 3 States were selected upon which 100 copies of the structured questionnaire were administered in order to collect data to assist in the study. The sample/subjects

included workers in both the private and public sector, students, youth corps members, indigenes and non indigenes involved in the TVE sector of education. The simple statistical method of frequency and percentage was used to analyze the data collected. Out of the 300 copies of questionnaire administered, 287 copies were returned. Out of this number, 12 were invalid, leaving 275 valid copies. The analysis of the result was based on the 275 valid copies.

Table 1: To Determine which objective has Been Less Vigorously pursued

S/N	Test Options	FREQ	
	Trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce	20	7.3
	Technical knowledge and skills for industrial, commercial, agricultural and economic development	25	9.1
	Availability of manpower to deal with environmental problems	72	26.2
	Professional studies in engineering/technology	29	10.6
	Skill training for production of craftsmen and technicians who are self-reliant	35	12.7
	To enable young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology	94	34.2
	Total		100

Table 1 shows data which aim to determine which objective or objectives, seen as vision and mission of TVE have been less vigorously pursued by Government. Options 1, 2, 4, and 5 are less than 40% of the total view expressed by respondents. Option 3 seems to have a stronger view with 72 respondents (26.2%) who maintain that the objective of manpower training to deal with environmental problems has been less vigorously pursued by Government. Option 6 seems hold the strongest view that the objective of TVE which is meant to make young men and women to appreciate the increasing complexity of technology has been less vigorously pursued by Government. This view is supported by 94 respondents who constitute 34.2%. Perhaps our young men and women are not able to appreciate the increasing complexity of science and technology due to the absence of a science and technology culture (Tongpak & Kabila, 1998).

Table 2: To Assess which Strategy(s) has Been Less Vigorously Adopted by Government to Achieve the Objectives of TVE

S/N	Strategies	FREQ	%
1	Expansion in facilities for manpower training	10	3.6
2	Placement of HND graduates at par with their university counterparts	63	22.9
3	Integrated teaching of science in schools	10	3.6
4	The broadening of the curriculum and an expansion in courses to include crafts and cottage industries within a Effort to encourage women participation in TVE	12	4.4
5	Establishment of technical colleges and trade centres by State and Local Government	60	21.8
6	The use of Advisory Boards in designing courses	17	6.2
7	The participation of industries in TVE training	13	4.7
8	The role of NBTE in accelerating courses also in the non-formal sector	20	7.3
9	Increased funding by Government	15	5.5
10	Total	55	20
	Total	275	100

In Table 2, considering 50% as a reasonable assessing limit, placement of HND graduates, women participation in TVE and increased funding of TVE can be considered as strategies that have

been less vigorously adopted by Government in achieving the objectives of TVE. These are shown in options 2, 5, and 10 which have 63 respondents (or 22%), 60 respondents (or 21.8%) and 55 respondents (or 20%) respectively. This result on women participation in TVE is supported by earlier studies by Ugwanyi and Olokun (2001), cited by Adenigbagbe (2004) in which female enrolments in the sciences and TVE in Colleges of Education in Nigeria lag behind that of their male counterpart. This, Adenigbagbe strongly attributed to the fact that the policy document (National Policy on Education, 1998) regarding women participation in TVE is quite flimsy. Adenigbagbe contended that women education in Nigeria has been largely controlled by factors such as power structure, political group, property ownership, dominant interest and public policy information process. The remaining options, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9, only go to show that

Government has made considerable effort in adopting the strategies towards the achievement of the goals of TVE.

Table 3: To Determine the Vision and Mission of TVE in National Integration and Cohesion in the 21st Century

S/N	Test Option	FREQ	%
	Skill training and employment" opportunities for self-reliance	52	18.9
	Skill acquisition, sense of security and freedom of mobility in skill practice	105	38.2
	Skill training, equal employment opportunities/terms and conditions and benefit of employment, security and freedom to live and practice <u>skill in any part of^Nigeria</u>	118	42.9
	Total	275	100

The data of Table 3 which aim to find out the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion show that options 2 and 3 present strong views worthy of note. Option 2 shows that the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion are those of skill acquisition, sense of security and freedom of mobility in skill practice. This view is supported by 105 respondents or 38.2%. Option 3 presents the strongest view which is that the vision and mission of TVE are skill training,, equal opportunities and conditions of employment as well as the security of lives and skill practice in any part of Nigeria. This view is expressed by 118 respondents who constitute 42.9%.

Table 4: The Scheme that has Assisted TVE in National Integration and Cohesion

S/N	Test Options	FREQ	%
1	SIWES	70	25.5
2	TTTTP	20	7.3
3	NYSC	75	27.3
4	Unity schools	60	21.8
5	Federal Character Commission	50	18.2
	Total	275	100

Table 4 presents data to determine the best scheme that has assisted TVE in national integration and cohesion. Government, over the years has put in place schemes in TVE to enhance integration and cohesion. These are the Unity Schools, Technical Teacher Training Programme (TTTTP) and the Supervised Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). Others are the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Federal Character Commission (FCC). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1962) advocated for personality development, sense of judgment and adaptation to different environments. The schemes listed above aim to achieve just that. The FCC in particular, aimed to not only give a balance in Federal work distribution but shows 'the distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging...' (Afigbo, 1989). Therefore, the opinions expressed by respondents in options 1, 4 and 5 are high. The NYSC scheme in option 3 is seen by respondents to be the best scheme that has assisted TVE in national integration and cohesion, as 75 respondents or 27.3% have shown.

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Table 5: To Determine which Problem (s) Hesesets the Vision and Mission of TVE in National Integration and Cohesion

S/N	Test Options	FREQ	%
1	Regional tensions/conflicts	52	18.9
2	Bth no-religious intolerance	54	19.6
3	Inadequate supply of facilities	25	9.1
4	Selfishness/ favouritism	50	18.2
5	Poor leadership	20	7.3
6	Inadequate funding	22	8
7	Institutional (school) and national strikes	52	18.9
	Total	275	100

In Table 5, regional tensions/conflicts, ethno-religious intolerance and selfishness, favouritism and strikes are strong problems confronting the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion. These are shown by 52 respondents or 18.9%. 54 respondents (19.6%), 50 respondents (18.2%) and 52 respondents (18.9%). These are truly in line with the views held by Takaya (1996), Ogunrinola (2000), Ezeigbo (2000) and Manabete (In press). The consequences of all these, as respondents have indicated in Table 6 are insecurity, threat to lives and property, retardation of economic activities, divisive tendencies, displacement of communities and obstruction in technical policies and programmes. This is shown in option 6 where 73 respondents (26.6%) have attested to the All of the above¹ option. Maitatsin riots of Yola and Kano, the Zangon-Kataf riot and the Oodua People's Congress/Hausa clash are few of the many proofs of these developments (*Weekly Trust*, 2001; *This Day*, 2001 & Usman, 2002).

Table 6: The Consequences of the Problems in Table 5

S/N	Test Options	FREQ	%
1	Insecurity of lives and property	40	14.6
2	Retardation in economic activities (leading to poverty and hunger)	47	17.1
3	Divisive tendencies	38	13.8
4	Displacement of communities	35	12.7
5	Obstruction in technical policies and programmes	42	15.3
6	All of the above	73	26.6
	Total	524	100

Table 7: Vision and Mission of TVE in National Integration and Cohesion in the 21st Century

S/N	Test Options	FREQ	%
1	Increased skill training and employment generation	32	11.6
2	Even development and distribution of the national income	25	9.1
3	Increased funding and prudent management of TVE resources	23	8.4
4	Ethno-religious tolerance	30	10.9
5	Peaceful coexistence and freedom of mobility in skill practice	30	10.9
6	Respect for the rule of law	22	8
7	Dialogue in conflict resolutions	20	7.3
8	Intensification of social mobilization strategies	22	8
9	All of the above	71	25.8
	Total	275	100

Table 7 shows the views of respondents regarding the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion in the 21st century. Majority of the respondents, numbering 71 or 25.8% went for the "All of the above" view in option 8. Consequently, in the 21st century skill training and employment opportunities, even development, ethno-religious tolerance, freedom and peaceful coexistence, among others, are essential for the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion, as adequately stressed by Abu (2001) and Yakubu and Mumah (2001). **Summary of Results**

The findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. The less vigorously pursued objectives (vision and mission) of TVE are those that deal with the availability of manpower to tackle the problems of the environment and the enabling of young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.
2. Placement of HND graduates, increased women participation in TVE and increased funding are strategies that have been less vigorously adopted in achieving the objectives of TVE.
3. In the 21st century, the vision and mission of TVE, in national integration and cohesion will involve skill training, equal employment opportunities, security of lives and property and freedom to live and practice one's skill in any part of Nigeria.
4. But although schemes like the SIWES, Unity Schools and Federal Character Commission have assisted TVE in national integration and cohesion, NYSC remains the best scheme in this direction.
5. In the 21st century, just in the 20th century, regional tensions/conflicts, ethno-religious intolerance, selfishness and strikes have remained potential problems that militate against the vision and mission of TVE.
6. The consequences of the problems in (5) above are numerous: insecurity of lives and

property, retardation in economic activities which can lead to hunger and poverty, divisive tendencies, displacement of communities and obstruction in technical policies and programmes.

7. In the 21st century however, the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion should be geared towards increased skill training, employment opportunities, even development, increased funding and ethno-religious tolerance, among others.

Conclusion

Technical/Vocational Education, introduced into the Nigerian education system decades ago was expected to serve as a springboard for Nigeria's technological growth and development. Its vision and mission were clearly expressed in its aims and objectives, with well spelt out strategies for achieving the objectives. TVE, as a type of education geared towards skill development, aimed to expose or integrate individuals into the Nigerian society as effective, functional and self-reliant people. However, with the advent of unfavourable incidents, such as regional/ethno-religious strife, ; poor leadership, political instability, corruption and indiscipline, the TVE environment has been gravely hampered and the atmosphere made unsafe for effective skill practice. The goals of integration and cohesion, expressed in such schemes as the NYSC, FCC, SIWES and Unity Schools, has been questioned. The study therefore, set out to assess the goals and strategies of TVE and the schemes which assist TVE in national integration and cohesion in the 21st century, taking the North-East as a case study. The structured questionnaire was administered in 3 States, namely, Adamawa, Bauchi and Bornu. The data collected were analyzed using a simple statistical method of frequency and percentage.

The study has found that the Federal Character Commission, SIWES and NYSC have assisted TVE in national integration and cohesion. It has also found, among others, that in the 21st century, the vision and mission of TVE in national integration and cohesion should be geared towards increased skill training, funding, employment opportunities, even development and ethno-religious tolerance. Finally, as Manabete and Zamdayu (2004) advised, "The spirit of nationalism ...and hard work needs to be imbibed by the citizenry." When this is done, individuals can integrate themselves freely in the Nigerian society and practice their skills in nation building without restraint.

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